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北京青年报
BEIJING YOUTH DAILY



Designing the impossible

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Collectors quest for relic bikes

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Rat and rabbit fated for auction



By Venus Lee

Christie's shot down the possibility of a private sale of two relics: the bronze rabbit and rat heads pilfered more than a century ago from Yuanmingyuan, the ruined summer palace.

The auction will be held February 23 to 25 in France despite protest.

The price of stolen Chinese relics has skyrocketed in the last decade. The bronze ox head was recovered for 6.5 million yuan in 2000; this year, the pair of heads may fetch 176 million yuan.

China opposes the auction of any cultural relics plundered by the

Eight-nation Allied Forces and hopes for their fair return, Song Xinchao, an official with the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, said.

Only five heads have been recovered. The whereabouts of the remaining seven, aside from the two heads up for auction, remains unknown.

Rumor has it that two heads were sighted in Japan.

The cultural heritage office fears that when the dragon head surfaces, it will carry an outrageous price, Liu Yang, a lawyer working to recover the lost pieces, said.



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Martial masters fight to make ends meet



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Iraqi woman 'mixes up' Beijing and Amsterdam

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Grape Wall blogger wild on wine



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Anti-drought measures start to yield results

By Jin Zhu

Farmers may expect a good summer harvest despite the current drought due to the government's anti-drought measures.

Li Chunyan, a 48-year-old farmer who lived in the village of Wuyang County, Henan Province, has nearly 1.3 hectares of farmland she shares with her eight family members.

"The drought began last May. At first, we irrigated fields by pumping groundwater from our wells. However, the lasting drought has made it too expensive to keep irrigating the fields with an electric pump," Li said.

She said electricity costs 0.75 yuan per unit. It takes her 11 units to irrigate just over a twentieth of a hectare.

"Since the current drought is more serious than usual, I'm up to using 14 units of electricity. It costs 210 yuan each time I flood the fields. It is too expensive," she said.

The Ministry of Finance said Friday it has allocated 400 million yuan to relieve drought-hit areas. Of the total, 60 million yuan has been given to Henan Province.

Premier Wen Jiabao told local governments to allocate relief funds as soon as possible during his February 7 visit to Henan Province.

Li has great expectations for her yield. "The relief funds came at the right time. I harvested 100,000 kilos per hectare last year. If the field can be irrigated on time, this summer should be the same," she said hopefully.

Besides that, the local government in drought-hit areas were urged to speed up construction of water control systems, reservoirs and irrigation projects.

According to the report from the Office of State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters, the number of drought-hit areas is declining. On February 11, about 16 million hectares of farmland was dried up, down 1.6 million from February 7.

About 60 percent of the winter wheat fields in Hebei, Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangsu, Henan, Shandong, Shanxi and Gansu provinces have been irrigated, and most of the drought-hit plots will receive water within 10 days.

The China Meteorological

Administration forecast that drought-hit areas are likely to see moderate rainfall of 2 to 4 millimeters from Wednesday. In Hebei and Shandong provinces, rainfall may reach 5 to 10 millimeters.

During the past two weeks, wheat prices have risen in some parts of the country in anticipation of a poor harvest. The grain exchange price rose 3 to 21 percent in Shandong, Jiangsu and Liaoning provinces on February 8.

"The food supply in the country will remain unchanged. Losses caused by the drought will be reduced substantially if farmlands are properly irrigated," E. Jingping, head of the Office of State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters, said.

Courier firms fret over new draft law

By Venus Lee

A revised law for the postal service and related regulations will be released this month according to the Ministry of Communications' Web site. It marks a turning point in the regulation of couriers, though foreign firms worry the revision may cut them out of the express market.

Foreign businesses are particularly concerned about a provision in the latest draft that states, "Foreign companies may not invest in the domestic letter delivery business." They fear the new law will undermine their ability to compete in the nation's rapidly expanding market for document and package delivery.

"The profits in the market for express documents and packages are very high considering the low cost and easy operation. No one is willing to give up this big piece of the cake," Hu Tao, a post-office worker, said.

"We believe there should not be any discrimination in the domestic express market between foreign-invested enterprises and domestic companies because it violates the principle of fair competition," TNT Beijing said.

Foreign-owned delivery firms, most of which have been operating in China as joint ventures since the 1980s, fear the regulations will make it harder for them to compete with China Post, the state-owned postal service.

But Cao Kangtai, head of the State Council Legislative Affairs Office, said "this regulation does not violate the country's commitments to the World Trade Organization, and does not affect the receipt, transport or delivery of documents for international delivery by foreign express-delivery companies."

Express delivery is a big business in China, accounting for a third of the postal system's 96.71 billion yuan in revenue last year, according to figures from the State Post Bureau. It is also a growing market: the volume of traditional letters carried by the system fell 2.5 percent in 2007 while express-delivery volume rose 21 percent.

Farmers, students insured



After consulting the public, the government prepared its final version of the medical reforms. According to the plan, farm workers and students will be two new groups given national insurance. Within three years, 90 percent of the Chinese public will be in the insurance system. (By Jin Zhu) IC Photo

New measures underway to stimulate employment

By Jin Zhu

The General Office of the State Council said Tuesday that enterprises which want to reduce at least 20 staff members or 10 percent of their workforce must submit an explanation to their affiliated trade union or to all employees 30 days in advance. The clampdown comes against a backdrop of increasing difficulties in finding work and an already unstable market.

According to the council's notice, enterprises must also explain their staff reduction plans to the labor and social security administration. The council called on local departments to step up their supervision and prevent enterprises from stalling payments or closing down after hiding their funds.

The global financial crisis has affected China's economy, and job seekers face an even tougher

time this year. According to estimates from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the first quarter will be the "toughest" period for getting a job.

More than 7 million college graduates will enter the job market this year and 9 million urban residents are already seeking jobs.

The ministry said the government expects to keep the registered urban unemployment rate at 4.6 percent throughout the year and will prop up enterprises, invest and organize job training sessions to hold down unemployment.

The Beijing Municipal Bureau of Labor and Social Security said Tuesday that it will popularize places for starting businesses that promote public welfare. The first special show will be held in Xuanwu District in June.

"We will provide at least 20

places for people in a tough spot, such as families who have no employed members, poor families and people just released from labor camps," Yu Yiqun, director from the service center of the Labor and Social Security Bureau of Xuanwu, said.

Yu said such positions would be at recycling stations, breakfast vending stations and newspaper stands. The government will provide free stalls during some big activities, such as temple fairs in Grand View Garden and Changdian.

The Labor and Social Security Bureau of Xuanwu said at least 1 million yuan will be provided to borrowers in the district.

"Small and medium-sized enterprises which have accepted at least three unemployed people will get a break on their interest payments when applying for a loan," Yu said.

Gov steps up ban of organ transplants for expats

By Han Manman

The Ministry of Health (MOH) said Tuesday that the country will prohibit foreigners holding a tourist visa from receiving organ transplants. Medical institutions found to violate the new law will be punished.

The ministry's statement came after a report said that 17 Japanese nationals received organ transplants in China since such surgeries were banned for foreigners in 2007.

The operations were mostly kidney and liver transplants, and the patients were 50 to 65 years old, Japan's *Kyoto News* said, citing an unnamed official with a non-profit organ transplant organization in Japan.

The Japanese patients spent an average 595,000 yuan each for their operations at an unidentified hospital in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, the report said.

Some patients were admitted to hospital under Chinese names as requested by the hospital, Kyoto said. Most of the organs they received are assumed to be from executed prisoners, the report said.

"China prohibits organ transplants for foreign tourists in accordance with international practice," Mao Qunan, the ministry's spokesman, said at Tuesday's press conference.

"Due to the lack of organ donors, a shortage of organs is a problem in all countries: not just China. Priority must be given to domestic patients in urgent need of an operation," he said.

The MOH has ordered domestic hospitals not to perform organ transplants for foreign tourists. Those who want to conduct such operations must acquire official approval from provincial health departments, and provincial health departments must report to the MOH before giving approval to the applications.

Domestic hospitals must also prohibit their doctors from performing organ transplants while traveling overseas as tourists, the ministry said.

While MOH reiterated the ban, Guangdong's government carried out spot checks in hospitals in Guangzhou Tuesday.

"The inspection group checked the medical records of all organ transplants that our hospital did from early 2007 to December 2008," a doctor at The First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-Sen University, said.

"We were also asked to prepare detailed materials for these organ transplant cases," he said.

China banned trade in human organs in May 2007 and prohibited foreigners from receiving transplants. So far, the ministry has granted 160 medical institutions license to conduct transplant operations.

Amateur soccer players call out national team

By Venus Lee

A recruitment post has been circulating on Internet forums the last week. Its mission? To create a Chinese soccer dream team to take on the infamously under-qualified national team.

The campaign was started by five office workers at an IT company in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, who will conduct face to face interviews with select applicants.

"In the beginning, many people took it as a jab at the national team, but we are serious. Although we are amateur

players, we hope to stimulate the incredibly disappointing Chinese team through our efforts," Wu Chengcheng, the spokesman of the group, said.

They have received 1,000 applications via email since the notice first went out three weeks ago. The number of applications has grown steadily since the end of Spring Festival, and recruitment will continue for another two to four weeks. "The applicants come from all over the country and most of them were born in the 80s. Some are ama-

teurs, soccer school graduates or high school or college team players. They all want to take on the national team," Wu said.

Several professional soccer coaches have volunteered to join. "So far, we have four coaches willing to train our team in their spare time. We plan to arrange it so they work in turns," Wu said.

Wu said the coaches have already stipulated criteria and procedures for short listing applicants. "We plan to hold the selective trials in Suzhou first. If they go well, we will promote them in other cities," Wu said.

The organizers are also seeking cheerleaders, a composer to write a team song and designers to create an emblem. Wu said he hopes it will inspire more Chinese people to care about soccer.

The organizers said they will contact the Chinese Football Association (CFA) soon, but their efforts may be in vain. When *Beijing Today* phoned the CFA, Dong Hua, its spokesman, said: "The national team has already had a year-round schedule, so they have no time to play against amateurs."

Lawyer's appeal shows gaps in gov transparency

By Huang Daoheng

Yan Yiming, a Shanghai lawyer, appealed in January for the government to open its budget books, including those containing information on its 4-trillion-yuan economic stimulus plan. While his request has not been granted, Yan's move revived old questions of openness.

On January 7, Yan went to the Ministry of Finance and the National Development and Reform Commission. He filed an application demanding that authorities open to the public their 2008 and 2009 budget books, including a list of some approved projects in the stimulus plan.

Yan said his application was based on the Decree of Government Information Openness, which took effect last May. In his appeal, Yan asked the ministry to disclose the sources of the 4 trillion yuan, the names of the approved specific investment projects and the budget for the projects.

The Ministry of Commerce refused Yan's appeal on January 21, stating "it is not suitable to make it open now."

The draft of the central government budget and final accounts must be reviewed and approved by the National People's Congress, and it will not be published until it has been approved, the reply said.

Yan, however, said he would persist in his appeal. "First of all, I am a citizen, and second, I'm a citizen who knows the law," Yan said. "Our government must exercise its power in the open."

Experts saluted Yan's behavior. "The items mentioned in Yan's request are relevant to the public interest and should be released by the government," Wang Xixin, a professor at the Peking University and one of the drafters of the Decree, said in a recent interview.

"This kind of application is precisely why a right to access information exists. Furthermore, good interaction between the government and the public is essential in managing the global financial crisis."

However, Wang was pessimistic about Yan's chances of success. "It is possible to get some of the items on the final budget, but getting them to release the whole budget is probably not going to happen," he said.

Zhao Xiao, an economics professor with the University of Science and Technology Beijing, said the lawyer's plea for transparency makes sense and is a way to curb official corruption.

When the Asian financial crisis struck in 1997, the central government also issued a stimulus package of 1 trillion yuan and did help the country weather the economic storm. But dozens of officials were caught making illegal gains off the stimulus, Zhao said.

Birds die in poachers' nets



People have erected illegal nets to catch birds along the Yunhe wasteland in Jiaxing, Zhejiang Province. Local authorities have demolished the nets but their owners have yet to be caught.

CFP Photo

Bogus Daft Punk show cheats fans

By Wang Yu

Fans in Shanghai of French electronic music group Daft Punk were excited to get tickets last weekend to tonight's secret concert. Over 2,000 tickets were sold at 500 yuan each for the event.

There is only one problem: Daft Punk will not be there.

"I can confirm that Daft Punk is not playing in Shanghai this week. The band is not touring this year, and at no point were they approached to do this show," Peter Elliott, the group's agent, said.

The hoax was exposed Monday by Pitchfork.com, a reputable site covering the music scene. Since then, duped ticketholders have been scouring Facebook for the identities and whereabouts of the

two masterminds.

Thomas Ramirez, from France, and Andy Da Silva, from Switzerland, were named by PR team member Julien As Roukin as the men behind the fake show.

Roukin and other staff members were recruited through EnjoyClassifieds.com.

Secret concerts do exist in Paris, where famous musicians play secret shows without promotions. That's why the fake event targeted French people in Shanghai, Roukin said.

"We had doubts after the job interview, but after having spoken to several people last Friday and as a fan of Daft Punk – knowing the way they communicate is fairly discreet – we soon forgot them," Roukin said.

Ramirez and Silva said they work for a company called "Red Wall Events" in Beijing and have a connection to Daft Punk. But promoters in Beijing found no record of the company. "On Sunday, after we sold all the tickets, I had more doubts when I was told I wouldn't be allowed to see the venue," Roukin said.

On Monday, Roukin tried to call the organizers for a refund but they said they were busy dealing with logistics. On Monday afternoon, Roukin got in touch with EMI, Daft Punk's record label, who put him in touch with band member Thomas Bangalter in Los Angeles who said the show was a fake.

"On Tuesday morning, Andy sent me a text message to arrange

an appointment at 11 am in the office. I tipped someone off and they vanished with the money," Roukin said.

He tried to find the organizers but failed. The manager of Oasis Offices, the office they had used for ticketing, had not kept copies of the men's passports. They are presumed to have been operating under fake names. The property company has uploaded surveillance footage to the Internet and informed police.

"The band's representatives are currently looking into what future action can be taken. All Daft Punk shows are announced on the band's official MySpace site, and we urge fans to check there before purchasing tickets for shows," Elliott said.

International NGOs still stuck in 'grey zone'

By Han Manman

International non-governmental organizations (NGO) have existed as a special group in China for nearly 20 years, but their legal status remains a mystery. Few people know what they are actually doing here, why they came and how they operate.

The government has provided no legal structure for handling cases involving these NGOs, nor has it established a tax system for them. They exist quietly in a void that some would call a "grey zone."

Existence without status

Since China opened its doors to the international community, many international NGOs have found their way in.

Their existence in legal limbo came to attention last May while providing relief after the Wenchuan earthquake.

Nine days after the quake, a few young people were seen in front of a local chemical plant warning people to stay back and to report its condition to the State Department of Environmental Protection.

The backs of their T-shirts showed they were from the environmental protection organization Greenpeace, which entered China 12 years ago. Like the visits of many foreigners, their work was not understood by the locals.

Their experience is a miniature of the international NGO world in China, where hard work goes unrecognized and is never registered.

"We are not registered on the mainland, but we are registered in Hong Kong," Greenpeace spokesman Wang Xiaojun admitted that his organization is "in a grey area, and is relatively marginal." Greenpeace has offices in Beijing and Guangzhou.

"If we are allowed to register as an independent civil society organization, then it will open a lot of room for development," Wang said.

Lack of direct registration prevents Greenpeace from raising funds on the mainland, Wang said. This limits its funding available for domestic projects by forcing it to rely on donations from Hong Kong and Greenpeace international.

Three ways to survive

"At present, the mainland has no registration or monitoring system for international NGOs," Zhang Haibin, research director of the Peking University International Organizations Research Center, said.

"No way to register" puts the NGOs in a relatively vague situation: most local governments have elected to take an attitude of "no recognition, no intervention, no ban" when international NGOs come to town.

"Most [international NGOs] chose indirect approaches," Zhang said.

Those like Greenpeace register in Hong Kong, while others prefer to register with the Bureau of Industry and Commerce on the mainland as "consulting agencies" or "research centers," which offer business consultations. However, they provide only one or two consultations per year.

All unregistered international NGOs share the same problem of having no legal status, which causes trouble when recruiting members and receiving donations, and also when processing their employees' visas.

Because of this, there are varying figures on the number of NGOs in China, Zhang said.

Professor Wang Ming, director of the NGO Institute of Qinghua University, said there are 3,000 to 6,500 international NGOs in the country.

Two faces of international NGOs

The government has its worries about allowing in international NGOs.

Since international NGOs first entered 20 years ago, they have played an active role in the country's development. However, many international NGOs have less honorable motives for moving to the middle kingdom.

"There are many types of international NGOs. Some have helped China, but others have worked against the government or attempted to seek profits using their NGO status," said Zheng Xiaojie, director of Beijing Hong Dandan Edu-Culture Communication Centre, a domestic NGO that aids the blind.

Zheng said her NGO had a bad experience with an international NGO that made them wary of future cooperations.

Zheng said her NGO started a project in 2004 to train blind broadcasters. A British man named Stephen Halett came to them as the representative of an international NGO and said he would help them apply for funding from a British foundation.

"Since Stephen Halett was blind, we trusted him and signed a cooperation agreement with him in early 2005," Zheng said.

Zheng said Halett got 3.5 million yuan from a British foundation for the project. However he only told them that he got the money; never how much money he got.

"He also asked us to sign a blank contract before he wrote down the details such as how the money would be invested in the project and the budget," she said.

Zheng said they realized it was a trap that used the domestic NGO's lack of experience to get money. They took Halett and his NGO to court.

"They lost the lawsuit and paid us compensation," Zheng said, adding, "We care less about how much compensation we got than we do about informing domestic NGOs that they need to be on alert when working with international ones."

Guidelines needed

How to balance the positive and negative effects of international NGOs in China is a big question for the government.

"In dealing with international NGOs we cannot overlook how they affect our national stability and security. However, they have become an important part of the international community," Zhang said. "Avoiding or ignoring them is not a solution. We have to accept their presence."

To that end, Zhang said they must make sure international NGOs follow the law. But a legal framework for monitoring them remains missing.

Bright future

The government is planning to pass laws to regulate domestic NGOs, and experts predict it could be a step forward for their international counterparts.

The China Ministry of Civil Affairs said an amended version of "Social Organizations Registration Ordinance" (1998), the main guidelines for NGO in China, is waiting on the State Council for approval.

Under the amendment, foreign civil organizations which meet qualifications can be recognized by the government as an organization, an insider who worked on the amendment said.

However, though the new amendment may provide a way for international NGOs to enter China, the registration requirements will be quite stringent.

"No way to register" puts the NGOs in a relatively vague situation: most local governments have elected to take an attitude of "no recognition, no intervention, no ban" when international NGOs come to town.

"There are many types of international NGOs. Some have helped China, but others have worked against the government or attempted to seek profits using their NGO status"



Their existence in legal limbo came to attention last May while NGOs were providing relief after the Wenchuan earthquake. IC Photo



An international NGO visited local universities to spread information about AIDS prevention. CFP Photo



More and more meetings held between China and international NGOs show the organizations' important role. IC Photo

By Jackie Zhang

Wushu or Chinese martial arts, which dates back 6,000 years, is regarded as a symbolic sport of the country. Since ancient times, it has had a huge following, with enthusiasts going to wushu schools to learn the art. But wushu's popularity began to steadily decline in 1949, and it is now in danger of fading away.



Liang Weiguang, the master in Hongshengguan in Foshan city, teaches a class of children.

Hard days for wushu schools

Wushu schools in financial trouble

Early each morning, Yao Chengguang, 55, goes to the Beijing Zongxun Wuguan (wushu school), located in Beizhuguan Hutong, Dongcheng District. Yao opened the wuguan in 1994 in honor of his father, a famous yiquan or martial arts master from the 1940s to the 1980s.

"Through yiquan, people not only become stronger physically, but they also strengthen their mind and spirit," said Yao, who is chairman of the Beijing Yiquan Research Association. He learned yiquan at age eight from his father, and in the late 70s, he began teaching it to others as well.

Since the wuguan was established 15 years ago, the number of students has remained at around 40. With each course costing 300 to 400 yuan, the money the school makes is barely enough to keep it going. "We have to rent houses and employ coaches. Some students are from places outside Beijing and we have to provide them accommodations and food," Yao said.

To make more money, Yao created yiquan instructional manuals in print and video. "The financial situation is now better; we only have to worry about next month," Yao said, adding

that wuguan who are doing well can be described in the same way.

In the past, wuguan flourished because owners also ran other business at the same time. "They ran business that took advantage of their wushu skills. Their knowledge of wushu ensured that the goods they transported reached their destinations despite the danger of robbers," Yao said. But that business model cannot work anymore. "I'm busy

with the daily affairs of the wuguan," Yao said.

Wuguan in other parts of the country are in the same bind. These include the more than 100 wuguan in Foshan, Guangdong Province, the birthplace of various kinds of wushu, including Yongchunquan, Hongquan and Nanquan. It is the hometown of martial arts masters like Huang Feihong and Ye Wen, the teacher of Kung fu star Bruce Lee, and in 2004 was named "Wushu City of China" by the Chinese Wushu Association.

"Students' fees alone cannot support the wuguan. We hardly earn enough money for the monthly rent, and water and electricity bills," said Huang Sheng of the Hongshengguan, a wushu school that is 150 years old. "We have a team that does lion dances during the opening of a new restaurant or company. That helps us earn some more money," he said.

Root of difficulties

China's turbulent recent history is one of the reasons for the wuguan's decline. "During the Cultural Revolution, the practice of wushu was forbidden. It was regarded as a cause of society's instability," Yao said. "At that time, if you practiced wushu, you could only do so secretly ... All wuguan were closed until they gradually disappeared," he said.

China's economic reforms that began in 1978 gave wuguan new life. "Wuguan started opening again, but years of lying dormant made it difficult to repopularize the martial art," Yao said.

Wuguan are regarded as folk organizations, so they do not get support even from wushu associations.

"Wuguan are not our business," a woman surnamed Lian from the

A new student at Hongshengguan is accepted in a ceremony.



Students from Russia practicing basic yiquan movements with Yao.

Photos provided by Zongxun Wuguan/Hongshengguan

Beijing Wushu Association said. She said the role of the association is to sponsor meetings of directors of each of their 57 wushu research organizations and to disseminate information about wushu competitions and policies.

"When we organize wushu competitions or similar events, we have to look for sponsors among local enterprises," Xue Mianben, chairman of the Foshan Wushu Association, said. "Some managers of local enterprises love martial arts and will invest money in wushu's development. But in the past three or four years, it has gotten more difficult to collect money. Businesspeople focus on how they will benefit. They think wuguan can't give them what they need," Xue said. The situation has become

doubly painful because of the global financial crisis.

Hoping for another chance

Despite the disheartening signs, some wushu practitioners continue to remain optimistic. Xiao Bing, vice chairman of the Foshan Wushu Association and a taichi coach, spends most of his time researching how to revitalize the country's martial arts industry.

"It's a pity that sports from foreign countries have progressed more than Chinese martial arts," Xiao said. "In primary and middle schools, students take up taekwondo as an extracurricular activity ... We tried to offer taichi and other wushu courses in schools, but students declined. At present, few young people appreciate wushu," he said.

But Xiao believes the key to wushu's renewal actually lies in

Xiao suggests that schools and universities work jointly with wushu associations. "We must start wushu promotion among the young in order to build a solid foundation," he said.

Another proposal is to establish uniform rules for wushu competitions, no matter what type of martial art it is. "Because rules are different, people get confused. Then competitions don't get organized regularly. It leads to a vicious circle. Gradually the public loses interest," Xiao said. He said one of the reasons judo and taekwondo are popular is that the sports have unified and clear rules during competition. "When people win competitions, they are stimulated to work harder."

In addition, it is also a good idea for wuguan to attract more foreign students. "More foreigners are interested in wushu than locals are," Xiao said.

Zongxun Wuguan, for instance, has a regular stream of foreign students. "People from Japan, Poland, South Korea, US and other countries come to my wuguan. Some of them come several times a year and live in the wuguan for a week or even longer," Yao said. "Some of them opened Zongxun Wuguan branches in their native countries. The wuguan in Poland opened in 2002 was the first branch. Now, there are wuguan in Japan, South Korea, Italy and some 10 other countries," he said.

Beijing Taiji Wuguan, run by Zhang Shengyi, also sees hope in foreign students. "I teach students taichi in public parks and universities, including the Beijing Language and Culture University and the Beijing Sport University. Many foreigners are interested in taichi and come to learn with me. Then, they share their experiences with friends, and as a result, more foreign students join my class," Zhang said.

"There is potential for the renewal of Chinese martial arts. Every little attempt brings hope for the future," Xiao said.



Yao practices with a student.

young people. "We must give them more information about wushu and raise their interest in learning it," Xiao said.

One way is to correct misconceptions. "Young people read Jin Yong's novels, in which people practicing wushu are omnipotent and indestructible. But when they learn it, they find it is not the case and thus give up," Xiao said. "Wushu does not only deal with movements, but also a philosophy that integrates Buddhism and Taoism, which helps improve people's mindset, way of living and treating others."

China tells UN panel that it respects human rights

(Washington Post) – UN delegates took China to task on its human rights record Monday, pressing officials about Tibet, labor camps, the death penalty, torture in custody and the treatment of dissidents, in a UN rights panel's first full review of the country's progress.

The Chinese delegation, led by Ambassador Li Baodong, defended the government's treatment of citizens, telling the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva that people in China are free to voice their opinions to the media and that the govern-

ment opposes torture.

The questioning session was part of a review program started in 2007 that will examine all UN member states every four years.

In a report submitted before the proceedings, China emphasized that it believes human rights are related to economic growth. As standards of living have improved, it argues, so have political participation and the robustness of the judicial system.

"China respects the principle of the universality of human rights," the document states.

But, it adds: "Given differences in political systems, levels of development and historical and cultural backgrounds, it is natural for countries to have different views on the question of human rights."

Human rights groups say that China's comments during the session whitewashed reality and that events in the past few months showed evidence of abuse.

Of special concern at the meeting was China's treatment of ethnic minorities who live within its borders. China was criticized for its handling of riots

in Tibet last spring and for ongoing arrests and executions of people the government labels as suspected terrorists in the Muslim region of Xinjiang in the country's far west.

Some delegates asked China about reports that Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims were facing increasing restrictions on their freedom of religion, culture and expression following last year's violence. Li said the government would not allow torture to be used against ethnic or religious minorities.

Expert view

By Huang Daohen

China's human rights record should be evaluated from a historical context, Wen Yi, a local human rights lawyer in Beijing, said.

"China has showed relatively more tolerance toward the expanding civil society," Wen said.

"Compared to 30 years ago, when most people even had no idea what human rights were, let alone enjoyed them, we can see that China has moved forward," Wen said.

China's situation in the matter of human rights is dif-

ferent from that of Western countries, he said. "When you talked about human rights 30 years ago and earlier, it simply meant to be able to feed yourself and dress warmly."

From this perspective, China has made substantial achievements in the promotion and protection of human rights, particularly since it opened up its economy in 1978.

The country has made great achievements in poverty reduction, and as a result, became the first nation to meet the UN Millennium

Development Goals' poverty reduction target.

Statistics show that the average life expectancy of Chinese citizens has risen to 73 years, seven years more than the world average, and that the maternal mortality rate has dropped to 36.6 every 100,000 birthing women, 60 percent lower than the figure in 1978.

Meanwhile, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are encouraged to play an active role in promoting and protecting human rights.

There are now 400,000 reg-

istered NGOs in China, which are active in such fields as poverty alleviation, health care, education, environmental protection and human rights.

Wen said the fact that China submitted a report to the UN rights panel is a big step.

The government is trying its best to safeguard human rights, Wen said. "It's a long-term, never-ending job – not even one country can say it has achieved full respect for human rights," he said. "I think China's human rights situation has been constantly improving, year by year."

Official fired over blue ear disease outbreak

(Reuters) – An official has been fired over an outbreak of blue ear disease that killed over 1,000 pigs in Shanxi Province, Xinhua news agency reported on Wednesday.

The animal health official in Hongtong, Shanxi, was fired for mishandling the outbreak, Xinhua said. It did not elaborate.

The agriculture ministry announced on Tuesday that blue ear disease had killed 1,056 pigs, mostly piglets. The deaths led the province to launch an investigation.

A widespread outbreak in 2007 of blue ear disease, which mostly strikes breeding sows and piglets, helped create a shortage of pork in 2008.

China has since instituted a vaccination program across the country.

Beijing's stricter controls over live pig transport and the vaccination campaign mean the chance of a large-scale outbreak is slim, unlike two years ago when about 1 million pigs died.

Officials often try to prevent bad news from leaking out for fear it will harm their careers.

76 sentenced for Tibet riots

(AP) – China has sentenced 76 people and detained more than 950 since last year's deadly anti-government riots in Tibet, Xinhua news agency reported Wednesday.

The report attributed the latest figures to Nyima Tsering, a Tibetan Communist Party official, but did not elaborate on what the sentences were, what charges they faced or what happened to those detained.

The figures, however, indicate the legal process is ongoing. Authorities said in November that 55 people had been sentenced.

In preparation for the possibility of more unrest, the public security bureau of Lhasa started a "strike hard" campaign against crime, with raids on residential areas, Internet cafes, bars, rented rooms, hotels and guesthouses, Chinese media have reported. At least 50 people have been detained so far, the reports said.

"Illegal elements will be struck down if they conduct illegal activities," Wednesday's Xinhua report quoted Cao Bianjiang, the deputy mayor of Lhasa, as saying.

Shoe-throwing suspect out on bail

(BBC) – Martin Jahnke, 27, a researcher at Cambridge University, denied committing a public order offence during premier Wen Jiabao's visit to the university.

Prosecutors say Jahnke threw a shoe at Wen when the prime minister was speaking at the university on the third day of his British tour.

Jahnke, who is from Germany but now lives in Cambridge, spoke only to confirm personal details during the hearing before magistrates.

The case was adjourned until 10 March. He was given unconditional bail.

House hunters tour US for sweet deal

(USA Today) – A special Chinese tour group is heading to the US later this month to go bargain hunting for houses at foreclosure prices.

More than 40 affluent house hunters from across China will begin a trip to Boston, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles on February 24 in search of cheap homes to buy. Their goal: to find investment property and housing their children could use when they go to the US to study or work. Their budget: US \$300,000 (2 million yuan) to US \$800,000 apiece.

"US house prices are lower now, and we'll also be looking at low-price houses auctioned off by the courts," Zhao Xinyu, a manager at Soufun.com, the country's leading real estate Web site and the trip's organizer, said.

This is the first overseas buying trip for the real estate firm, whose name means "search house" and which has organized house-hunting trips inside China. It may not be the last.

"We won't force our clients to buy," Zhao said of this first group of bargain hunters, who are paying US \$3,600 each for the trip. "But if it's successful, we'll organize several more trips this year."

Hunting for employees too

Cash-rich China, whose purchases of US Treasury notes help prop up the government, is looking to the recession-stricken US for more than just houses at the right price.

Chinese companies are on the ground looking for US firms on



Buying a cheaper house in the US has become a priority for some Chinese citizens.

CFP Photo

the skids, said David Putnam, head of Asia for Houlihan Lokey, a Los Angeles-based investment bank that specializes in financial restructuring. They're looking for people, too.

"We are aware of a number of Chinese strategic players who are interested in acquiring distressed US assets in a number of industries," Putnam, who is based in Hong Kong, said. "They have people looking on their behalf, and they are sending people over to visit."

In the last two months, headhunters have been scour-

ing the US's decimated financial sector mostly for ethnic Chinese executives. Twenty banks from the Chinese financial capital of Shanghai toured in December in search of talent, the *China Daily* newspaper reported. Last month, the Chinese government dispatched recruiters to New York and Chicago for 1,700 people to help build the country's nascent financial services industry.

Buyers beware

But Wang Hongxin, director of the Real Estate Research Insti-

tute of Beijing Normal University, said that China's housing market may be a better investment than the States'.

"The Chinese real estate market has the greatest potential worldwide," he said. "Currently, it is not as hot as in previous years, but the rates of return will still be higher than other markets."

He also warned, "Some of the group (of Chinese buyers) may underestimate the challenges of investing overseas, as they are unfamiliar with the US culture and system."

Draft law sets limits on executive pay

By Huang Daohen

The government will set a ceiling on payments to senior executives in state-owned financial companies, a draft law proposed by the Ministry of Finance said.

The new cap will be set at 2.8 million yuan before taxes, the *Beijing Youth Daily* reported Tuesday, citing sources with an unnamed state-owned enterprise.

According to the draft, positions in financial companies are classified into five groups, with basic annual payments ranging between 50,000 and 700,000 yuan.

In 2008, while stock investors suffered losses of around 200,000

yuan each on average, some financial executives awarded themselves huge pay packages.

Guotai Jun'an Securities, a leading brokerage firm, paid out 3.2 billion yuan in employee salaries and welfare costs, far exceeding its budget of 2 billion yuan, according to a report by its president Chen Geng.

The report showed the company had 3,200 employees on the payroll, which means that the average salary of its employees reached 1 million yuan last year.

The executives' pay did not come close to that earned by their Wall Street counterparts, Xinhua

News Agency said. But in a country where the average urban resident has saved an average 15,000 yuan for disposable spending, Guotai Jun'an emerged as a symbol of porked-up paychecks.

The company's name made headlines in many local newspapers and was one of this week's most-discussed topics on the Internet. The *Guangdong Daily* ran a front page story about the ill effects hefty executive salaries were having on public morale during an economic downturn.

Under pressure, the company disclosed Monday its executives'

pay details to prove they were not overpaid.

The incident and the government's response reflected the public's scrutiny of state-owned enterprises in times of trouble, Sun Qunyi, secretary-general of the Remuneration Commission of the China Association for Labor Studies, said in a recent interview.

"People don't mind how much an executive in a private financial institution earns. But for those in state-owned financial companies, salaries and bonuses should be based upon executive performance and should be capped," Sun said.

CCB not tempted to buy overseas

China Construction Bank (CCB) is not interested right now in using its plump capital cushion to make foreign acquisitions, Chairman Guo Shuqing said Wednesday.

Guo said there were still too many questions about the asset quality of overseas banks for CCB to consider investing abroad.

"Quite a lot of things interest me, but not now, not to buy because of the uncertainty," Guo told *The Asian Banker*.

"There is a lot of bad debts, bad assets coming on the books. So we are not so keen to do that at the moment," he said. "We have a very big market here. We have big potential for growth in China."

(By Huang Daohen)

Beijing Foton sells vans to Iraq

By Zhao Hongyi

A Beijing automobile industry is selling commercial vehicles to Iraq as part of an effort to rebuild the war-torn country's infrastructure.

Beijing Foton, the carmaker, said it won a second contract to export 3,000 Foton View vans to Iraq this year. It exported 1,200 in 2008 and delivered 939 during the first two months of this year.

The van is designed for inter-city transportation of passengers and goods. The automobiles will be used as buses, shuttles and for government use, Li Xingxing, Foton's overseas market supervisor, said.

"We have redesigned the vans for the particular market's needs, making them more reliable and cheaper," Li told local media earlier this week.

Foton, established in 1996, produces large buses, light vans and trucks. It is known for comparatively high quality and low cost.

Foton has a clear picture of Iraq's vehicle market. It is now targeting four sectors of the market, namely taxis, light buses, heavy buses and luxury car renting.

The rebuilding of Iraq, estimated to cost the equivalent 684 billion yuan, is focused on education, energy, petroleum, medical health and railways, the local *Morning News* in Baghdad reported.

Big projects include rebuilding the Basrah Port (82 billion yuan), Baghdad International Airport, International Commercial Town and a number of luxury hotels in the capital (116 billion yuan) and construction of residential communities, hotels and tourist destinations in Najif (232 billion yuan).

"Iraq's reconstruction program has been open to many public bids," Zhu Yaosheng, China's economic and commercial counselor in Baghdad, said. He warned of security problems in the country, which remain defined as "red" by the international community.

First international book fair opens

By Han Mamman

The first international book fair center was opened here by China Book Import and Export Monday.

According to the company, the center was formed to enhance cooperation with overseas book companies in organizing 20 international book fairs in China every year. It will also help introduce Chinese books to the world.

HK Disney inflates ticket prices for visitors

By Jin Zhu

Hong Kong Disneyland raised its weekday admission prices for mainland and overseas tourists by nearly 20 percent Monday.

According to an announcement released on February 3, the one-day admission fee increased from HK \$295 to HK \$350 (308 yuan) for adults and from HK \$210 to HK \$250 for children aged 11 and under.

However, Hong Kong residents and tourists who purchase tickets through travel agents can get the original prices through June 30.

"It was the first time admission fees were adjusted at Hong Kong Disneyland since it opened in 2005. The decision was made after much thought. In the past few years, the operating costs have increased a lot. Research shows guests choose to visit more based on when they have time than when they have money, so a fee change should not deter visitors," Lu Bingsong, vice president of external business in Hong Kong Disneyland, said.

Faced with soaring fees all over, the tourism industry has expressed dissatisfaction with the Disneyland price hike.

Michael Wu Siu-ieng, chairman of the Hong Kong Association of Travel Agents, said the decision was unwise in the current financial climate.

"At present, the global tour-



Hong Kong Disney's price hike is a strange move given the current financial turmoil. CFP Photo

ism industry is trying everything to attract visitors with low prices. However, Disneyland is the exception. I cannot understand its policy," he said.

He also said he fears the new price policy will make mainlanders resentful of Hong Kong locals, who can continue to enjoy the lower price.

Liu Wu Huilan, head of the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau of Hong Kong said it was only a business decision. The bureau reminded the company to consider the effects of a price hike.

According to the company's latest performance report for the first quarter, income from the Dis-

neyland Park and holiday resort is about US \$27 billion, down four percent from last year.

"The admission prices are the lowest among the five Disneyland Parks. The price hike could be related to its drop in performance," Meng Keyu, marketing manager of Beijing Caissa International Travel Service, said.

Market watch

Stimulation package turns stocks around for New Year

The recent Chinese New Year's cheer infected the stock market during the first eight trading days after the holiday on January 26 as the Shanghai Composite Index (SCI) rose steadily from below 2000 points to break the 2100 and 2200 point barriers.

With the launch of the government's industrial stimulation policies, the market looks set to climb even higher.

On February 1, the State Council released policies for the year to promote stable agricultural development and steady income growth for farmers. Agricultural stocks

became the first to flower after the New Year, 77 percent of them outperforming the SCI.

On February 3, the petrochemical industry announced its draft scheme for 2009 may be released at the end of the month, with oil refining and chemical fertilizer its probable focus.

The news boosted the shares of PetroChina and Sinopec after the New Year holiday, while shares of Salt Lake Potash, a leading chemical fertilizer company, leapt 38 percent since the beginning of the month.

The State Council approved

and released stimulation plans for the textile and equipment manufacturing industries on February 4, and was reported to have labeled shipbuilding as a key industry and formulated adjustment and stimulation plans for it on the same day.

On February 6, news broke that a stimulation plan for the electronic information industry was submitted to the National Development and Reform Commission, which had passed it on to the State Council. Sixteen companies in the information service industry have risen 30 percent since the beginning of the lunar

New Year and only one of the 56 listed companies dropped.

The State Council also approved adjustment and stimulation plans for the auto and steel industries on January 14. Listed steel companies rose significantly in the first trading days of this month.

Investors are said to be concerned over the future of relevant industries and shares after the launch of industrial policies and plans this year. Some worry that since some shares have risen significantly, they may not be able to sustain the trend in the future.

(ChinaStakes.com)

Are coupons the cure for economic recession?

By Huang Daohen

Can China boost its sagging economy and stimulate domestic demand by issuing coupons to its citizens? Debates have ensued as some local governments began distributing coupons to low-income earners during the Spring Festival.

Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province, initiated the move by issuing coupons worth 38 million yuan to its low-income residents. The municipal government in Hangzhou Province followed with a similar project that cost 100 million yuan.

According to local media reports, an estimated 380,000 residents in Chengdu received coupons, while the number in Hangzhou was higher at 580,000. Nearly half of the recipients were primary and middle school students.

Each person received coupons ranging in value from 100 to 200 yuan, which may be used in local business establishments such as supermarkets, cinemas

and book stores.

Markets in both cities reported a surge in customers during the week-long Spring Festival holiday. The Hangzhou government on Monday said it will expand the project and issue additional coupons for use in the tourism and education sectors. Coupons may also be given as part of the salary of local officials, the government said in a statement.

The Ministry of Commerce on Monday acknowledged the significance of the initiative, saying they are playing a role in stimulating domestic demand.

"The issuance is a special form of action taken under special situations," Jiang Zengwei, the vice minister of commerce, said. "It's proper and feasible. As far as I'm concerned, cities like Chengdu and Hangzhou have seen a boost in local consumption because of the coupons."

But Jiang stressed the importance of increasing earnings for

low-income families, saying the distribution of coupons is just a temporary measure to spur domestic consumption.

With demand shrinking in global markets, coupons have emerged as a way to encourage domestic spending. Japan has given its citizen each coupons worth 15,000 yen (1,100 yuan), while Taiwan has provided residents with coupons worth about 750 yuan.

In China, the idea was first proposed by Nobel prize-winning economist Robert Mundell when he attended an economic forum in Nanjing last December. Some Chinese economists said the plan would not be effective since Chinese people are known for being frugal.

"If you give them coupons, they will only use the coupons and bank their money instead of spending it. Ultimately, there won't be an increase in consumption demand," one economist said.

Comment

Way to share economy gains

Coupons are a way for the public, especially those in rural areas, to share the dividends of the country's economic growth in the past 30 years. Most farmers are low-income earners. If every farmer gets an 800-yuan coupon, it will encourage spending and boost consumption in rural areas.

— Li Ruogu, banker

Raise subsidy for poor instead

Should the rich be given coupons too? The country is facing a major wealth gap. If the poor are

given such coupons, should rich people also be given the same treatment? It's more appropriate to raise subsidies for the poor.

— Felix, engineer

Does not make sense

Coupons do not make sense in China. The country's economic slowdown is due to falling external demand and decreasing investment in the domestic real estate sector. It needs to stimulate domestic demand to make up for weakening exports and real estate investments. China will not stimulate its econ-

omy by issuing coupons. It is facing oversupply in such sectors as steel, raw materials, cement and machinery. Coupons will not help increase demand for those commodities.

— Wang Qing, chief economist of Morgan Stanley China

No cash exchange

The coupons should be used for consumption, and coupon-holders should not be allowed to exchange them for cash. Otherwise, the plan won't work.

— Jeff Bass, foreign teacher

Tighter fireworks regulation urged

By Zhang Dongya

The northern building in the new China Central Television (CCTV) complex caught fire Monday night, later confirmed to have been caused by fireworks ignited by the station's own employees.

The blaze killed one and injured seven, according to the city's fire control authorities. The incident led tens of thousands to discuss whether Beijing should renew its ban on fireworks during the Spring Festival.

In a related development, the Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau issued a report saying the city's air quality plunged to its worst Monday ever since the Olympics, following a night of fireworks displays to mark the end of Spring Festival.

"We haven't seen such poor air quality since May 29 last year, when the city was hit by heavy pollution," Du Shaozhong, deputy director of the bureau, said.

The air pollution index, which measures major pollutants within a 24-hour period from noon to noon, hit 307 Monday. This translated into a "heavy" level of pollution under the national standard. Although it is no secret that Beijing's air quality has been deteriorating, Du said massive fireworks displays were to blame for the recent heavy pollution.

Considering that the big fire at a bar in Fujian on January 31 that killed 17 was also caused



A fireworks display led to Monday's CCTV blaze.

Photo by Tina Jia

by fireworks, more people supported that their use be more tightly regulated.

Since January 25, the eve of the lunar New Year, 403 people have been injured and 103 fire incidents have been reported due to fireworks, according to official data.

Beijing passed a bill to ban fireworks in urban areas during the Spring Festival in 1993. It was amended in 2006 to allow people to light fireworks at designated places and within a limited period during the lunar New Year holiday.

This year, the city loosened the restrictions to allow fireworks displays in central downtown during the holiday. People were allowed to set off fireworks from 7 am to midnight within the Fifth Ring Road. The ban resumed after the Lantern Festival on February 9.

Comment

Re-adoption of ban necessary

We can make a long list of the dangers brought about by fireworks; these will obviously increase in densely populated cities like Beijing.

It is a fact that with the loosening of the restrictions, more accidents have occurred. People setting off fireworks on the streets have caused many problems, including losing a good night's sleep. The government can consider organizing official fireworks displays, just like during the Olympics.

— Sun Shuqing, student at Tianjin University

It is about customs and tradition
It's an age-old custom and tradition to set off fireworks during the Spring Festival holiday. A firework-free festival will not only ruin the

atmosphere, but also break the tradition which has been popular in the country for hundreds of years.

— Shen Chen, engineer at Sanyo company

A complicated social work
For fireworks, it is never a simple question of banning them or not. They are harmful because they can cause fires and deaths, but they have other functions that have no good substitutes.

The point should not be the government's total ban or permission, but for the government to regulate citizens' behavior, and to control their negative impact with the help of local officials, departments and residents. A moderate display of fireworks that avoids massive disturbance to others should be encouraged.

— Ma Yingguo, commentator on China Youth Daily

Nude art clothed in protest



Netizens say dressed David no longer "vulgar".

Photo provided by juetuzi.cn



Internet users angered by censorship in cyberspace have dressed up images of famous renaissance nudes in a protest against Beijing's crackdown on "vulgar" online content.

Images posted as part of the protest include Michelangelo's statue "David" shown in a Mao suit, while black socks and a strategically placed necktie were added to the artist's depiction of Adam on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

The protest began last week after a user of the social networking site Douban.com complained that images of several paintings, including Titian's nude "Venus of Urbino," had been deleted from an online photo album.

According to blogs on the site, Douban's administrators had told the user that posting pornography would endanger the site's operations.

In response, the protest's organizers asked Internet users to clothe artwork to "save" them from the censors, who have shut down 1,635 Web sites and 200 blogs in a one-month campaign against content that "harms public morality." (Agencies)

'Red expat' recounts cynical youth in Chinese bio



Geiges' book was launched at the 798 art district last Tuesday. Photo provided by CIMG

By Venus Lee

Adrian Geiges, 48, China bureau chief of German magazine *Stern*, is known to his local friends as the "red expat" because of his passion for communist ideology as a young man. After traveling through several socialist countries, he decided to stay put in China. Last Thursday, his autobiography in Chinese was released, in which he described his younger years as a *fenqing*, or cynical youth.

Fan of Chairman Mao

"I was very extreme and cynical when I was young. I regarded capitalism as absolutely wrong and communism as completely right and progressive," Geiges said during the launch of his book, *How the World Revolution Once Accidentally Started in the Black Forest*.

At 12 years old, he read Chairman Mao's Little Red Book, after which he joined the youth arm of the Moscow-affiliated German Communist Party. "I enjoyed reading the Red Book on the school playground, but my classmates called me 'red pig' or 'red rat' at the sight of my 'Mao Bible,'" Geiges said. "But later, more and more schoolmates became red rats, and I became their leader."

At 18, he was sent to a secret cadre school in East Germany. After obtaining his bachelor's degree from Westphalian Wilhelm's University Muenster, he began his journalistic career and discovery of the "revolutionary world." His work took him to socialist countries such as the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, Vietnam and Nicaragua.

Opportunities in China

He first visited China in 1986, when he was tasked to examine the development of Chinese socialism as a leader of West Germany's communist party. "Chinese culture is very different from that of other countries where I'd lived, but it's very interesting. Although I had language difficulties at that time, I accomplished two things: one was to travel around Beijing on a bicycle, and the other was to visit Chengde," Geiges said.

He returned to China in 2000 and founded the local enterprise Gruner Jahr, the magazine division of the German-based Bertelsmann media group. As the company's chief executive officer, he started the Chinese editions of *Parents*, *Fitness* and *Inc.* magazines. In 2003, he switched jobs

and became *Stern's* China bureau chief.

He is married to a Chinese woman, and they have two daughters. After more than 10 years in China, Geiges says he has become a "native" and feels like a fish out of water whenever he goes back to Germany. "He has gotten used to Chinese culture and life, and behaves in a very Chinese way," Honghuang, one of his friends here said.

A witness to change

Geiges' maternal grandfather was frightened at the mere thought of China. When he was a child, the man told him that China had a massive population and that if the Chinese people marched West with sticks and rice, the whole world would be theirs. "But I was a stubborn and unruly young man. The more my grandpa exaggerated China, the more I was fascinated with her," Geiges said. "In my life, I've been marching further and further to the East: from West Germany to East Germany, later the Soviet Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and then China," he said.

"It has been over 40 years since my grandpa made his prophecy. During this period, the Chinese have indeed conquered the world – but through their products instead of sticks and rice," he said.

Through his work as a journalist, he has kept close track of the country's growth. "China has changed a lot in the last 30 years. The change has been tremendous but good. Most people pay attention to the economic changes, but I think the most important and interesting changes have to do with people. For example, Chinese people were very timid and shy when I first moved here; now, they are more open and confident," Geiges said.

But he said there has not been as big a change in the country's political arena due to the country's particular circumstances. He however looks forward to more democracy in the country and a better legal system.

Iraqi woman mistakes Beijing for Amsterdam

By Zheng Lu

"I really wish to go back home, I miss my kids," Iraqi woman Muna H. Abadulkanum said while weeping at the Daxing District detention house.

Abadulkanum, 42, who arrived at the Beijing Capital Airport on January 27, is suspected of being a stowaway. She denied the charge, saying she was on her way to the Netherlands to have her eye treated.

She had approached the airport's public security bureau (PSB) desk for help, saying she mistakenly thought she had reached Amsterdam, because the man who bought her ticket told her that was her destination.

Abadulkanum, who did not have any money or luggage with her, was later transferred to the municipal PSB's Division of Exit and Entry. She does not have a visa to enter China, so she is guilty of illegal entry, no matter whether or not

the act has been intentional.

"I have done nothing wrong," Abadulkanum insisted.

According to the law governing the entry and exit of foreigners into the country, Abadulkanum should remain in detention while an investigation into her case is ongoing. "It is not a punishment, but just a compulsory measure," Wang Kun, an officer at the Exit and Entry Administration, said.

Abadulkanum said a doctor at a Baghdad hospital said her left eye, which was injured in an explosion, needed to be treated in Europe. The man who purchased her ticket, whom she could only identify by his last name Ahmed, apparently overheard the doctor's diagnosis and offered to help her get to Amsterdam.

"Liar! He is a liar," Abadulkanum shouted. She said she paid Ahmed US \$11,000 (75,000 yuan) for the trip, money which came from

the sale of her house. Her husband died in an explosion and she and her three children lived at her sister's house, she said.

Beijing police said that before being brought to the detention house, Abadulkanum underwent a health examination, which gave her a clean bill of health.

"Many stowaways say they are going abroad to see a doctor, but it's really so they could apply justifiably instead of paying a human trafficker," Lin Song, another officer at the Exit and Entry Administration said. Lin said that based on other cases, stowaways are not given harsh punishment. "Normally we just send them back to where they came from," he said.

Abadulkanum said representatives from the Iraqi Embassy have come to see her, and have said the embassy would shoulder her fare back to Baghdad once the police releases her.



Abadulkanum is suspected of being a stowaway and is in detention.

Photo by Zheng Lu

Local wine culture exposed on Grape Wall of China



Jim Boyce at a wine tasting event in Beijing



Jim Boyce and Ma Huiqin, another blog contributor, on a trip to the Yunnan Red Wine Company
Photos by Jim Boyce

By Annie Wei

Wine enthusiasts should check out the blog Grape Wall of China, written by a dozen China-based experts in the industry. Its founder, Jim Boyce, a 40-year-old Canadian, has made a name for himself in Beijing as a food, wine and nightlife blogger.

Boyce writes extensively about the wines he has tried, talking about them vis-a-vis Chinese cuisine and local wine lovers. The blog includes wine tasting events, interviews with wine fans in and out of China and links to the country's premium wineries and distributors.

The latest from the blog is that it is holding the first Grape Wall of China Challenge, an activity which aims to identify some of the best affordable wines. Boyce is organizing the event with Nicolas Carre

of Maxim's of Paris and Frankie Zhao of Pro-Wine Consultancy, both contributors to the blog.

"Our focus will be wines that retail for less than 100 yuan, to find ones that are modestly priced and good, something important in these tough economic times," Boyce said.

The challenge will be judged not only by professionals in the industry, but also by ordinary consumers. "For the consumers, we simply want to know if they like or dislike a particular wine. So we will give them four choices: love it, like it, don't like it and hate it," Boyce said.

Around 75 percent of the panel of judges will be made up of Chinese residents. "We need to learn more about Chinese wine tastes and our challenge is one small way to do this," Boyce said.

A chat with Jim Boyce about wine in China

BJToday: What's your background and what motivated you to run a blog that focuses on the wine scene?

Jim Boyce: My background is in public relations and media rather than in wine. But I enjoy wine and run the blog as a hobby for three main reasons.

First, I meet many Chinese people who are intimidated by wine, and think they need to take a course or read books about it. I want to encourage them to try wine on their own terms.

I equate it with my experience of coming to China and discovering foods from delicate dim sum to hearty Xinjiang to spicy Sichuan. How do I decide which ones I like? By trying the food at different Chinese restaurants. When it comes to wine, reading books and talking to wine experts are good, but in the end, the only way to discover what you like is to try it and trust your own nose and mouth.

Second, I think the world needs better information about China's wine scene. Too many people outside China rely solely on information from foreign wine professionals based here. Thus, I work with the blog's Chinese contributors – wine makers, academics, consultants – to write articles in English and get them exposure around the world.

Finally, I like to try Chinese wines, whether they are from Yunnan, Xinjiang, Shandong, Hebei, Gansu or Jilin provinces. There is little information about these wines in English on the Internet, so I write about them as much as possible.

Changes of wine scene

BJToday: You said you have been living in Asia for about 14 years and 4 years in

Beijing. What changes have you observed in the wine scene here?

Jim Boyce: The biggest change is choice. I recently went to Jenny Lou's, a shop near Chaoyang Park, and found 100 sparkling wines. One hundred! We now have wines from more countries, from more grape varieties and at more price ranges than at any other time.

As for Chinese wines, too many producers continue to make dry red thin wine and to blend imported wine with local wine, without mentioning it on the label. The quality is still relatively poor. When I arrived in 2004, the only winery with a good portfolio of wines was Grace Vineyard in Shanxi Province. More than four years later, this is still the case.

And as for consumers, I think the Chinese have become increasingly aware of wine, but the question is whether this is due more to taste or to fashion. For a healthy "wine culture" to emerge, consumers need the confidence to discover what they like, rather than follow trends. Wineries then need to address these tastes.

The taste of Chinese wine

BJToday: I've heard that wine from Yunnan Province is good. But the wine culture there is much younger than in cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Do you think the increasing number of expats and Chinese citizens who have lived abroad in these two cities are the main forces that drive their wine scene?

Jim Boyce: I find the aromas of white wine from the Yunnan Red Wine Company fascinating. It is made from hybrid grapes brought by European missionaries in the 19th century and I have given it to wine experts from

Australia, England, France and China. Their reactions have ranged from "undrinkable" to "interesting," while I find it smells like Concord grapes, which are found in North America. To me, this stresses the importance of discovering what you like, because tastes can differ across individuals and cultures.

As for the market, foreigners and Chinese people who have lived overseas are key drivers. This is partly cultural and partly because the wines in China, both imported and local, are geared toward foreign tastes. It might also be that Chinese people who have not lived overseas are more intimidated by wine.

Tips for getting good wine

BJToday: What do you think of the price of wines here?

Jim Boyce: Imported wine is expensive, due in part to the 48 percent tax. I find the real value, at least in Beijing, at wine tasting events. These include free tastings, which range from small get-togethers at wine shops to the huge Carrefour events with hundreds of wines. They also include events where importers present part of their portfolios at low cost. For example, Torres, Palette and the Hilton all held events in the past year with more than 100 wines for a very low cost. These are good ways to discover which wines you like before you decide to buy a bottle.

As for Chinese wines, some companies are charging extremely high prices for wine I consider very poor. I think they rely on consumers associating a high price with high quality. Again, Grace is the exception, since its 60-yuan wines are good value. I also think we will see an increasing number of good-value wines coming out of Xinjiang.

Places with regular wine tasting events

ASC Wines

It holds wine tasting every Thursday night at different places, like Cafe Europa, The Bookworm and The Pavillion.
Tel: 6318 1598 ext 162

Beijing Wine Club

It holds monthly wine tastings.
Email: info@beijingwineclub.com

Sequoia Cafe

Its events are held at the Jianguomen area.

Email: frank.siegel@gmail.com

Summertime Wines

It has monthly wine tastings.
Tel: 6562 5800

Email: infor@summertime.com

Anyone interested in Boyce's articles on wine can check out grapevallofchina.com, and beijingboyce.com for dining and nightlife reviews.



Wine tasting in town has boomed.

CFP Photo

Where to learn easy, amazing magic tricks

By Zhang Dongya

The country has been swept by a desire to learn magic tricks after witnessing the awe-inspiring magic show on CCTV's Spring Festival Gala. Many want to learn magic tricks in a school-type setting in which they hope to enhance their social skills, and at the same time have fun.

There are not many such training centers in town because of the instability of the magic industry. But one of the few is Qitian Magic Performance Training Center, which specializes in training professional magicians and in the exchange of knowledge among magic fans.

The center, founded in 2006, teaches not only stage magic but also tricks performed up close to viewers. The latter includes card magic tricks, corn tricks and "prop tricks" that involve flowers and silk scarves. These kinds of tricks are mainly for beginners and amateurs.

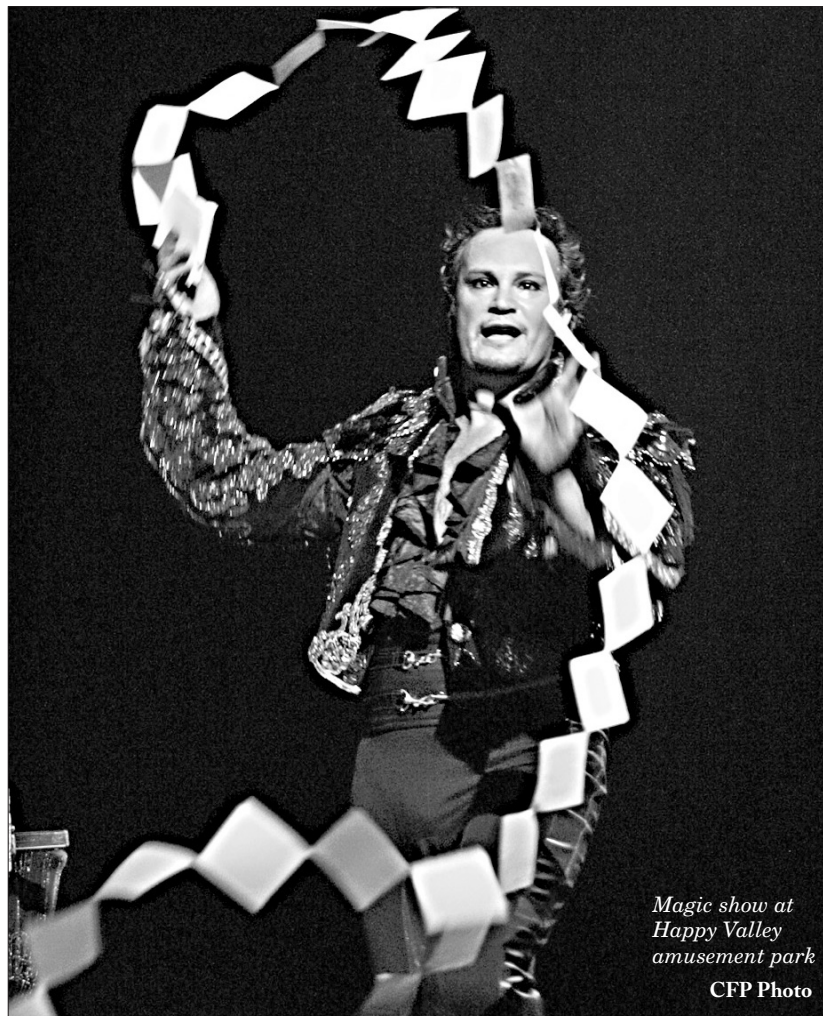
Tuition varies from class to class. The fee covers eight sessions, each running for an hour and a half. The Junior Interest Class, which is for ages four to 12, charges 300 yuan. The Close-Up magic program is divided into beginners and advanced classes, which cost 480 yuan and 850 yuan, respectively. The card trick classes are classified into three grades and 300, 500 and 800 yuan, depending on the level of difficulty.

Stage magic, which is more complicated to execute, is more expensive to learn. It starts at 1,500 yuan, and goes all the way up to 6,000 yuan for advanced learners.

Some people came to learn tricks to perform at their company's Lunar New Year party, the center's manager, Yuan Xijun, 34, said. Yuan is a member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians (IBM) and the China Acrobats Association (CAA). In China, magicians are under the scope of acrobats, which are supervised by the CAA, Yuan said.

Qitian now has more than 300 members; the youngest is four years old, while the oldest is in his 60s. Most of the teachers are professional magicians with many years of experience, Yuan said.

"There are also foreign members. Though we don't have English teachers for them, the instructors demonstrate and explain [the tricks] clearly," Yuan said. The center also rent and sell props to members.



Magic show at Happy Valley amusement park

CFP Photo

Main branch

Where: 3531, F/3, Guoyi Square, Gongzhufen, Haidian District
Open: 9:40 am - 6:40 pm
Tel: 6398 3031

Second branch for evening classes

Where: 159, F/3, Aipu Clothing Square, Sijiqing Qiao, Haidian District
Open: 6:40-10 pm
Tel: 6221 1979

Lanti Magic Shop

Another place to learn magic tricks is Lanti Magic Specialty Shop, the first and biggest magic store in town. Founded in 2001, it has the most comprehensive collection of magic props at the lowest prices. The shop can teach easy magic tricks for free to people who purchase their products.

Where: Erqijuchang Lu Dongli, Fuxing Men Wai, Xicheng District
Tel: 6803 8158

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiying@ynet.com

I'm looking for a Christian church in Chaoyang district that has English services. Do you know of any?

There is one at the 21st Century Hotel on the corner of Chaoyang West and Chaoyang North.

Where: 40 Liangmahe Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 5128 6388

There is also a service every Sunday at the Beijing City International School.

Where: 77 Baiziwai Nan'er Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 8771 7171

There is an English mass every Sunday 10 am at the South Cathedral, located right beside the Xuanwumen subway stop (Subway Line 2).

I want to get my teeth whitened and heard that some Western clinics charge about 5,000 yuan for the service. Do you know of places that aren't as expensive but do good work?

All hospitals' dental departments offer teeth whitening services. Chaoyang Hospital, for instance, uses products from a teeth whitening company called Beyond (cn.beyondwhitespa.com). The procedure costs 1,200 yuan per session and takes around 30 to 45 minutes. The dentist might recommend two sessions for better results, but it all depends on your teeth's condition.

Where can I find a reputable and sanitary art studio that does intimate body piercings and tattoos?

A tattoo shop called Mummy Tattoo (mummy-tattoo.com) comes highly recommended. It was one of the first tattoo studios in Beijing, and the guy who does the job is an art major.

Where: Room 1502, D-2, Building 38, Xingfu Plaza, Xingfu Ercun, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6417 8480

Do you know where I can get PLA (People's Liberation Army) coats, uniforms and hats?

Beijing Today sources recommend a shop on 17 Shibaidian, Chaoyang District. Tel: 6748 8925. You can also find a smaller one on the west side of Hepingli Xi Jie, south of the Third Ring Road.

(By Wei Ying)

BEIJING TODAY

serving the expat community

An English weekly

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Stories of the city's expats

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Designing objects for



The genius designer Philippe Starck

By He Jianwei

P.S. is the abbreviation for "postscript" when composing a letter. Designer Philippe Starck shares those initials in his name.

It was no coincidence his crafty curator played on the similarity in "P.S. I Love You," an exhibition which opened last Sunday to show Starck's works at China Central Place. The curator's aim was for viewers to look beyond function and appearance to see Starck's emotion.

Although Starck earned great fame through his designs, he finds his field shameful and his works an utter waste.



1. Table Gun
2. Romeo Louis S2
3. Mademoiselle
4. Mr Impossible
5. Aie
6. Ara
7. Juicy Salif

Photos provided by ATCASA

P.S. I Love You

Where: ATCASA, China Central Place, A6, Xi Dawang Lu, Chaoyang District
When: Until February 15, 11 am – 8 pm
Admission: Free

Juxta

Each view touch to lister about love. The rooms forming monologue on

The exhibit is a black room "P" and "S." T "I Love You" c

"The name interesting. Fr 'Aie,' you can f is a bold and u tive and dram explaining his

Stark, born works range i produced com ents dozens o lamps, sofas, l

The fist pi "Love" in Chi meteorite's cr a unique red s

A beam o simple susper This lamp us a blown-cryst acid-polished outside and sa

To match story about " tal Aie. It see

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Design

It seems toothbrush and he want materials an

He decl everything lutely unne "I will o years. I war

or objects

13

Center stage

posing design with love

er to the exhibition can rent an iPod
n to a monologue or conversation
e exhibition hall is divided into seven
g a long corridor. Each room has a
conversation.

ition is like a drama. The first room
m with a wall bearing the big letters
he two letters start the story, and an
on the final room's wall ends it.

es of Philippe Starck's works are very
rom those works, like 'Our Fire' and
eel that although people think Starck
uninhibited designer, he is also sensi-
atic," Duan Yanling, the curator said,
reasoning behind the presentation.
n in 1949, is a French designer whose
from spectacular interiors to mass-
consumer goods. This exhibition pres-
f consumer goods, including chairs,
beds and bathtubs.

iece is Aie, from the partial tone of
inese. Calling to mind images of a
ash, the water-filled goblet contains
tone lodged in the cut crystal.

f light rests on the goblet from a
nsion lamp called Romeo Louis II.
ses a 150-watt halogen bulb with
al outer diffuser, hand-ground and
the internal diffuser is acid-etched
and blasted inside.

the scene, the curator invented a
waiting." "Romeo stared at the crys-
ms that waiting became the theme

between the two designs," the monologue reads in
the earphone.

In the third room, two chairs are shown on a
stage. Starck gave those chairs romantic names:
one is Mademoiselle and the other is Mr Impos-
sible. The two chairs played opposing roles, so the
curator created a dialogue about the meeting and
parting of a man and a woman.

Mademoiselle is an innovative design for an
armchair with a clever matching of two different
plastic materials and finishes: the structure in
transparent polycarbonate offers solid support
and a soft seat.

The armchair uses two plastics that are
only "foreign" to each other: polycarbonate
and polyurethane.

Mademoiselle therefore represents the perfect
match, with a new solution for transparency and
softness, aesthetics and color, delicacy of appear-
ance and practical strength.

Mr Impossible is a plastic chair. The French
designer said its name came from how it could
not be made. Polycarbonate chairs are typically
formed using a single mold, but Starck's trans-
lucent design required two: one for the legs and
one for the seat. It was a testament to technolo-
gy's progress.

"Take the computer: It was the size of a room,
then a briefcase. Now it's a credit card. You cannot
dematerialize a chair completely, because you must
continue to sit on it. But you can make it invisible.
That's why I made Mr Impossible with a double
shell – it's basically made of air," Starck said.

Cynical and narcissistic

Starck started his design career in 1975
when he worked independently as an interior
and product designer. He became famous in
1982 when he designed the interior for the pri-
vate apartment of then-French President Fran-
cois Mitterrand.

Most notably, he has created a number of
relatively inexpensive product designs for the
American retail chain Target.

Inspired by his father, who worked as an
aircraft designer, Starck spent his childhood
under his father's drawing boards sawing, cut-
ting, gluing and sanding, and dismantling bikes,
motorcycles and other objects.

On his mother's advice, he studied design at
Ecole des Arts de Camondo in Paris.

Starck may be the most famous or prolific
designer alive, but his desire for aesthetic chal-
enge has led him to work on lamps, door han-
dles, cutlery, kettles, vases, clocks, scooters,
motorcycles, beds, taps, toothbrushes,
toilets and toilets.

Although most of his designs are usable,
he regrets having become a designer. "Design

stupidly produces more things, and for years
I have spoken about the importance of living
with fewer things."

Those "stupid" things have brought him no
small amount of wealth and fame.

Starck said there are different types of
design. Cynical design is one style developed
by Raymond Lowey in the 1950s. Lowey said
anything ugly would be a bad seller. "It is a ter-
rible philosophy. It makes design the weapon
of marketing, where producers make products
just to sell. It's shit; it's obsolete; it's ridiculous,"
Starck said.

The other school is narcissistic design,
wherein "a fantastic designer designs only for
other fantastic designers," he said.

Starck said making objects for profit is
shameful, and he believes designers must make
objects for the object's sake and for the human
beings who will use it. "If we take the tooth-
brush – I don't think about the toothbrush. I
think, what will be the effect of the brush in the
mouth?" he said, using his finger in his mouth
like an imaginary toothbrush.

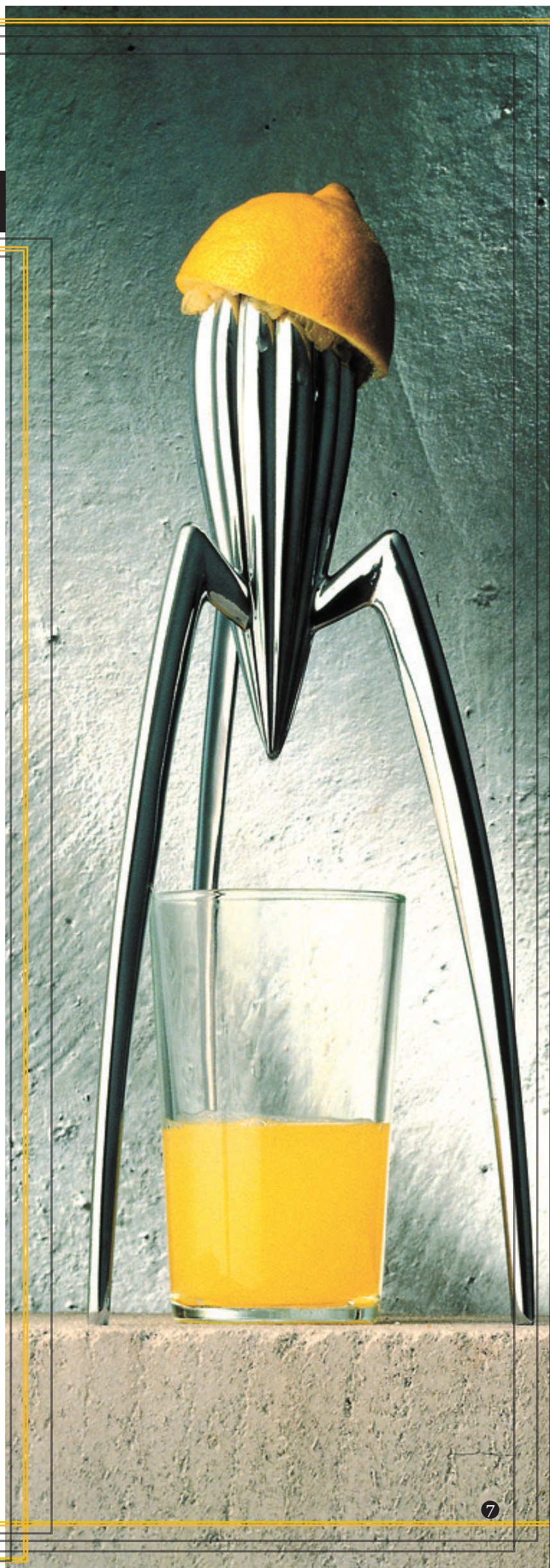
gn declared dead

that Starck has made enough
s and other consumer goods
s to retire. "I was a producer of
d I am ashamed of it," he said.
ared design dead, and said
he ever created was abso-
cessary.

definitely give up within two
nt to do something else, but I

don't know what yet. I want to find a new
way to express myself ... design is a dread-
ful artform."

He said he dreams of a future with no
designers, where they have been replaced by
gym coaches and dieticians. The only objects
to which he is still attached are "a pillow per-
haps, and a good mattress." But the thing
one needs most is the "ability to love."



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BEIJING TODAY

Editor: He Jianwei Designer: Yang Gen

The story of the black girl next door

By Charles Zhu

When Barack Obama was elected the 44th president of the US, the public was elated and hailed it as the end of racism.

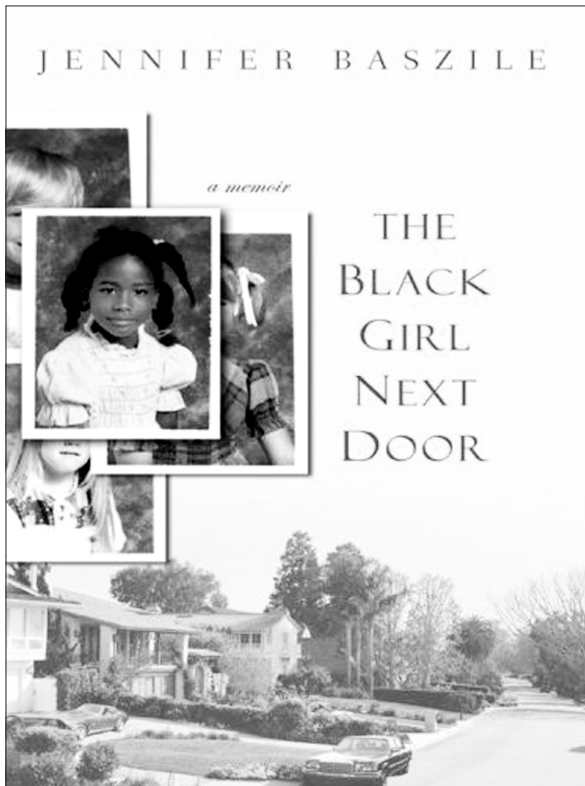
However, facts show things are not so simple for the 13 percent of Americans who are black. *A Memoir* (310pp, Touchstone Books, US \$25) by Jennifer Baszile, Yale's first black female professor of history, relates her sometimes exhilarating and sometimes sad experience from moving into Palos Verdes Estate, an upscale all-white suburban community in Los Angeles in the 1970s and 1980s.

Baszile's father ran a successful metal business and drove a Mercedes to the office. Her mother, very much devoted to social service, was a warm-hearted volunteer. The family owned a big and well-furnished house overlooking the ocean. They wore brand name clothes and went on frequent international tours: the upper-middle-class suburban life.

By living in one of the most exclusive suburbs, the Basziles thought that they had conquered racism. However, "We were sorely mistaken," Baszile says in her memoir.

Though Baszile's family had climbed the social ladder to be a fairly successful one, it still suffered social prejudice and discrimination surging from below the surface. They had to cope with resistance from white neighbors. Mischievous boys scrawled racial epithets on the front walk of their house and painted black a cherub in their front yard fountain.

At school, Baszile met numerous slights and rejections. When she won a footrace at a school track and field contest, one of her classmates said, "Black people have something in their feet to make them run faster." Her teacher did nothing



to correct the mistake. Her father, infuriated, showed up in his tie and suit, asking for an apology.

Despite all manner of social snobbery, she became the first black student-body president and finally made her way to Columbia University. In order to make herself look as much as the rest of her classmates as possible, she, like so many black girls, worked hard on straightening her hair.

However, it was more than a problem of hair: it involved the complicated and emotional sense of a black girl coming of age. At home she found a rift

between herself and her parents. Her father suffered a great deal under Jim Crow laws, and her mother was estranged from her Detroit family.

Her father simply would not hear her complaints: when he compared her life with his he told her she had not right to feel angry. The father and daughter had such vastly different visions on the question of race that they came close to a fight. The author says, "I don't think he realized that my California girlhood had instilled as much rage in me as his Louisiana boyhood had instilled in him."

She struggled and finally achieves her own identity of "the black girl next door," an identity different from her elder sister's white middle-class model in its rigidity and formality and social snobbery. She finds her own world beyond the Palos Verdes Estate where the family had fought so hard in order to live in.

What Baszile recounts here obviously relates to class as well as to race and to the elusive, sometimes almost shadowy limits of segregation. Electing a black president is far from enough to bury the US's racial problems: genuine integration remains a far off goal.

Love for art never fades

By Li Jing

Higher tuition fees and fewer employment opportunities have prevented many art students from studying abroad like their peers in the sciences.

However, many students like Zhang O still hope for the opportunity. After graduating from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, she continued her studies in London where she obtained a master's degrees in art at Byam Shaw School of Art in 2001 and Royal College of Art in 2004. Nowadays, she lectures at Oxford University and was awarded the New York Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Artist fellowship. Her works were exhibited 70 times in dozens of countries and are in permanent collections at the Guggenheim Museum in New York and Santa Barbara Museum in California.

This January saw the publication of her autobiography *An Empire Where the Moonlight Never Fades: From the Central Academy of Art to the Royal College of Art* (435pp, Shanghai Art and Literature Publishing House, 35 yuan), which chronicles a Chinese art student's exploration of the Western art world.

Tuition fees are an ongoing problem for her. In order to save enough money for her master's degree at Royal College of Art, she postponed starting the study for one year and made money every way she could.

She even worked for a senior nightclub. Zhang talked and drank with the clientele in exchange for her high salary, but ended up in trouble with a horny client. Zhang said the experience helped deepen her understanding of the relationship between sex and art. "Sex and money is a topic repeatedly discussed in my works. There have been cases of sex for the sake of art, but to me, sex is not equal to art."

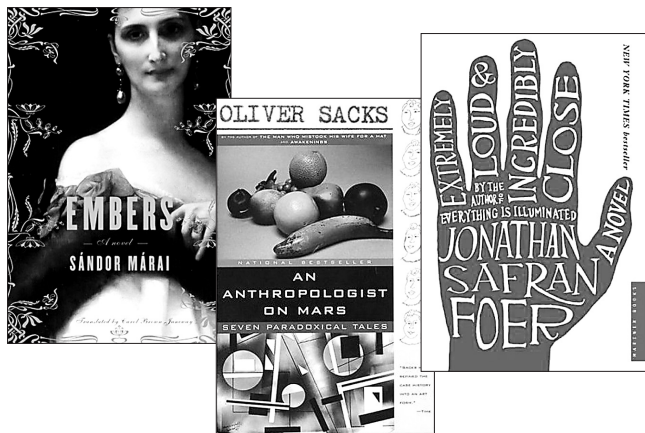
She is not a typical good student – sometimes she goes against her teachers' instructions and follows her own ideas. Though her studies at the Royal College kept her very busy, she also took time to try her new ideas.

Some may say her early success is just luck, but this book will convince you it was hard-earned.

Zhang will have a solo exhibition at the Pekin Fine Arts gallery this spring.



Bookworm book listing



Vivian Wang from the Bookworm recommends the following bestsellers to *Beijing Today* readers.

An Anthropologist on Mars

By Oliver Sacks, 329pp, MacMillan, US \$45.00

This collection of essays are mainly casebook studies. Neurological patients, Oliver Sacks once wrote, are travelers to unimaginable lands. This book offers portraits of seven such travelers, including a surgeon consumed by the compulsive tics of Tourette's syndrome unless he is operating; an artist who loses all sense of color in a car accident, but finds a new sensibility and creative power in black and white; and an

autistic professor who cannot decipher the simplest social exchange between humans, but has built a career out of her intuitive understanding of animal behavior.

Embers

By Sandor Marai, 224pp, Vintage, US \$13.95

Two old men, once the best of friends, meet after a 41-year break in their relationship. They dine together, taking the same places at the table that they had assumed on the last meal they shared, then sit beside each other in front of a dying fire, one of them nearly silent, the other one, his host, slowly and deliberately tracing the course of their dead friendship.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close: A Novel

By Jonathan Safran Foer, 368pp, Mariner Books, US \$13.95

Nine-year-old Oskar Schell has embarked on an urgent, secret mission that will take him through the five boroughs of New York. His goal is to find the lock that matches a mysterious key that belonged to his father, who died in the World Trade Center on the morning of September 11. This seemingly impossible task will bring Oskar into contact with survivors of all sorts on an exhilarating, affecting, often hilarious and ultimately healing journey.

(By He Jianwei)

Bike collectors crazy for vintage wheels



By Wang Yu

The history of the bicycle in Europe begins with the 1817 invention of the Laufmaschine by Baron Karl von Drais, a civil servant to the Grand Duke of Baden in Germany. The vehicle has been widely used in China since the 1950s, and the country was called "the country of bicycles" in the 1980s. Though modernization in big cities has drowned out the sound of bicycle bells with car horns, there are still some who have not abandoned the old styles.

The collecting bug

Feng Yuwen, a retiree, spends his time working on bicycles in the little courtyard of his apartment in Tianjin. "I'd rather call myself a bicycle fan than a collector," Feng said. He started to collect Japanese bicycles eight years ago and has bought six bikes of various makes and models.

Bicycle collectors, like those who love porcelain, clocks or stamps, seek out their pieces to learn about history as much as to complete their collection. The number of bicycles manufactured during the past 200 years has forced collectors to specialize in collecting bikes from a single manufacturer or a single period.

Most early products are known for their eccentric designs. From the "Hobby Horse" to the "High Wheel" mode, the variety of shapes of bikes can be seen as the original experiments. These models, which feature wooden rims and skinny tires, are extremely rare. Each teaches something about the mechanical solutions of its time.

Bicycles made from 1933-1965 are in the "cruiser" style. They had wide, balloon tires and heavy frames to improve durability. After that, muscle bikes and BMX (Bicycle Motocross) became popular: these are the mainstay of today's collectors.

Puyi, the last emperor, became the first bicycle lover in China after he received a bike from his English tutor Reginald Johnston. Tourists can find many door sills in the Forbidden City which were cut off to clear the way for the young royal bike lover.

Seeking foreign treasures

"There is a flea market of bicycles in the San Malu area of Nankai district. That's where Tianjin's bicycle nuts go. If you want to get involved in the circle, just start talking with the people there, some of them, especially the shop owners, are professionals," Feng said.

Bicycle collectors in China have also formed small groups based on the pieces they seek. Feng and his friends focus on Japanese products, which are easier to find. His favorite is a National bike which was manufactured in 1984, and the collector rides it daily to keep it out of storage.

"Most of the bikes by Japanese labels began to be manufactured outside Japan decades ago. Such bikes we can find in flea markets and are imported from Vietnam or other Southeast Asian countries, then local dealers purchase the goods from Guangxi Province," Feng said.

"Senior collectors aim for bikes manufactured in the early 20th century in England, the Netherlands, Germany or other European countries. They are the few masters in the bicycle collecting circle," he said. These vintage bikes never come out of their collector's basements to grace shop windows. "I have only once seen a Phoenix Head in the market. It takes a collector time and patience to get ahold of such a treasure," Feng said.

The "Phoenix Head" is the local nickname of Raleigh, a British bicycle company that is one of the world's oldest. Any Raleigh bike is most desirable for collectors.

In Beijing, there used to be a weekly gathering of collectors every Saturday at the northern bend of Beihai. They rode their vintage bikes to the park and shared information about new discoveries. However, those scenes are as much a memory as their vintage wheels.

Better than a Rolls-Royce

Wang Mingxi, a famous bike collector, started his quest in 1953 when he bought his first new Raleigh bike for 480 yuan, four times his monthly salary at that time. Fifty three years later, the 74-year-old's collection covers every type manufactured in the world from 1915 to 1980.

The "White Golden Man," a vintage bicycle manufactured in Britain in 1910, is Wang's most valuable piece and that upon which he built his reputation. The surface of the bike was electroplated to keep it from rusting the past 99 years. No more than 10 of this bike were brought to China by native businessmen returning back from Southeast Asian countries. His piece is the last one in good condition.

Wang met the former owner of the bike in the early 1970s, but the 80-years-old man was also a bike lover who refused to sell his ride. In 1975, Wang bought the "White Golden Man" from the previous owner's grandson for 1,000 yuan. Though the grandson knew the bike was passed down as a treasure, he took it to the flea market just to clear space in his room.

This bike is not only Wang's pride, but has also caught the attention of foreign collectors. In 1998, a British collector came to Beijing and hoped to buy the bicycle for 800,000 yuan, but Wang refused to sell. The foreign collector offered a Rolls-Royce in exchange for the bike. "I can use money to buy a car, but it can't help me to find another bike like this one," Wang said.

The trouble with collecting bikes is finding somewhere to store them, especially for Wang, whose collection of 300 vintage bikes requires more than 400 square meters of space. His basement flooded after a heavy rain once, and Wang hired three young men to help dry the bikes.

Last year, the world's largest bicycle museum was founded in Bazhou, Hebei Province, to display Wang's collection.



What more can I give thee on Valentine's?

By Gan Tian

With a day to go before Valentine's Day, lovers should have already picked out a gift for each other. But if some are still empty-handed after days of pondering What more can I give my sweetie? Then here are some ideas from *Beijing Today*.



MCM Bag

Women love bags, so there is a slim chance of going wrong with this hand-made bag created by European designer MCM (Mode Creation Munich), which is making a comeback in the premium accessories market. The bag's leather is soft, waterproof and UV protected. Even the leather used in the lining and trim has been waterproofed and dyed to prevent discoloration.

Available: 8 Jinyu Hutong, Wangfujing, Dongcheng District

Price: Dependent on model

Photo provided by MCM

Lalique Coutard Panels

The film *Coco Chanel & Igor Stravinsky*, scheduled for release this spring, describes the passionate relationship between the French fashion designer and the avant-garde Russian composer. In the film, Chanel and Stravinsky secretly meet in a room decorated with Lalique crystals. The oak wall diffuses the light, but the most eye-catching object is the Coutard panels serving as a headboard.

Designed in 1935 by Rene Lalique upon the request of a customer, the panels of satin-finished crystals represent thousands of fine water droplets.

Available: F1, Parkson, 101 Fuxingmen Nei Dajie, Xicheng District

Price: Dependent on model



Photo provided by Lalique

Photo provided by Forevermark

Forevermark Setting

For those who are ready to give up the single life and to propose marriage, here is a glittering something that may come in handy. The Forevermark Diamond Ring has four claws holding four diamonds, representing the directions north, south, east and west. "You are my compass, the one who grounds me yet allows me to reach great heights..." There are endless possibilities of poetry that can go with this ring.

Forevermark diamonds are selected for their exceptional qualities: less than one percent of the world's diamonds make the mark – just like your beloved, rare and the only one for you.

Available: AA29, Oriental Plaza, Dongcheng District
Price: Varies according to the diamond

Crocs Mammoth

Spring has finally arrived, but some days are still chilly. To warm your sweetheart's feet on Valentine's Day, why not surprise him or her with this pair of shoes? Crocs Mammoth has a furry lining that keeps feet warm, but which also allows them to breathe. Just like the classic Crocs, decorated buttons called jibbitz can be attached to the shoes.

Available: B1, South Tower, 9 Guanghua Lu, The Place, Chaoyang District

Price: 279 yuan

iLife

The software iLife was updated for 2009, but it only hit the market this month. With iLife, users can custom-make a present for their partner: a stylized video clip. But the process takes two to three days, so it will have to be a late V-Day present. Those who want to send the thought minus the sweat can just gift the iLife pack.

Available: Building 6, Court 19, Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

Price: 688 yuan

Photo provided by iLife



Homemade Thai hot pot

By Zhang Dongya

Northerners love their jiaozi, as much as southerners enjoy hot pot. Hot pot is great at home or in restaurants. The Sichuan and Chongqing varieties are the most well-known, but Thai hot pot, which has a hot and sour taste, is becoming increasingly popular. With a few pointers from *Beijing Today*, readers can enjoy this dish at home. Those lacking culinary competence can grab a list of restaurants that serve authentic Thai hot pot.

The unique flavor comes from the broth, which can give Tom Yam Kung

some stiff competition. In the same way, the soup can be a substitute for the hot pot broth.

The hot pot broth is not only tasty, but has medicinal properties because of its ingredients: Lemon grass helps relieve gas, excrete urine, reduce body heat and prevent the spread of certain kinds of bacteria; chilis, which are used in some cough medicines, help the respiratory and circulatory systems; kaffir lime, which is used to counter the strong smell of some food, can treat coughs and stomach aches.



Thai curry hot pot, 69 yuan, in Banana Leaf

Photo provided by Banana Leaf

Banana Leaf

Banana Leaf, or Jiaoye, opened its first restaurant in Hong Kong 20 years ago. Now it has branches all over the country and overseas, including Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. It has several restaurants in Beijing, including the very first and oldest one in Sanlitun.

It serves typical Thai food like Tom Yam Kung and Stir-fried Crab with Curry Sauce. Its Thai hot pot (69 yuan) has a thick curry taste. Diners can enjoy traditional Thai performances over dinner.

Where: 4, Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 11 am – 9:30 pm

Tel: 6506 8855

Lemon Leaf

Lemon Leaf, or Ningmeng Yezi, is well-known among locals because of its owner, Taiwanese pop singer Wu Qilong. It is said Wu opened three branches in Taiwan and one in Beijing because of his fondness for Thai food. He named them Lemon Leaf, after the most popular ingredient in Thai cuisine. Many young people head for the restaurant because of its association with the singer. At the same time, pop stars like to drop by for dinner, which makes it a good place to go celebrity-hunting.

The restaurant is known for its Benz Hot Pot (48 yuan, only for the broth) which got its name from a pot that is divided into three parts and is shaped like the logo of Mercedes-Benz automobiles. Customers have four choices of broth: curry, spicy and sour, spicy and chicken flavor. Popular among foreigners is the curry broth, which includes milk; netizens on food Web site dianping.com recommend the spicy-and-sour one, which tastes like Tom Yam Kung. The spicy, red-colored broth is similar to Sichuan hot pot's.

Where: 15 Xiaoyun Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 11 am – 10:30 pm

Tel: 6462 5505



Benz hot pot, 48 yuan, in Lemon Leaf



Banana Leaf

Photos provided by Banana Leaf

Ingredients:

1/2 kilogram fresh shrimp, 100 grams fresh button mushrooms, 1/4 inch fresh galangal, 6 kaffir lime leaves, 2 stalks lemon grass, 1 tablespoon red curry paste, 1 tablespoon coconut milk, 8 cups chicken broth, 4 cherry tomatoes, 1/2 cup fish sauce, 1 tablespoon sugar, 1/2 cup chopped fresh coriander leaves, 1/2 teaspoon ground chili, 1/2 cup fresh lime juice.

Instructions:

1. Peel shrimp. Cut lemon grass, galangal and kaffir lime leaves. Slice mushrooms. Cut tomatoes into eight pieces.
2. Heat oil in large heavy stockpot over medium-high heat. Stir-fry shrimp until color turns.
3. Add chicken broth, lemon grass, kaffir lime leaves and galangal. Bring to boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Add tomatoes, mushrooms, 1/4 cup fish sauce and sugar. Bring to boil. Add 1/3 cup lime juice and coconut milk.
4. Leave to simmer for a few minutes. Remove from heat. Season broth to taste with additional fish sauce and lime juice. Put chopped coriander leaves in the pot before serving.

Tips:

1. Some ingredients are hard to get, like galangal, which can be substituted with common ginger. Others like lemon grass and coriander leaves, which are indispensable to get the right flavor, are available at supermarkets.
2. For the right spiciness, it is better to use Thai chili sauce. Chili oil should be a last resort. The spiciness can be adjusted according to one's preference.
3. Coconut milk should be added according to taste. Those who prefer a strong coconut flavor can add more; regular milk may be used as a substitute.



By Li Jing

Liu Qian's magic tricks on the recent CCTV Spring Festival Gala have stirred interest in magic shows, especially those that are up close to and have interactions with the audience. Now Goose 'n' Duck Entertainment Properties is offering just that.

A stage is set on one corner of a hall, only a step away from the spectators. The magicians often step off the stage and perform tricks among the audience. But their hands are still faster than our eyes, and spectators are left, wondering how they do it.

The stars of the show are Luo Bingsong, a Beijinger, and Farrell Dillon from California.

A magic show up close and personal

Interaction with the audience is an inevitable part of their performance. "There is a big language barrier, but magic can transcend [it]. The audience enjoys what I'm doing even though they may not understand what I'm saying. That's magical," Dillon said.

Dillon, who performs for 50 minutes of the 75-minute show, infuses his tricks with comedy. The most breath-taking part of his show is the segment called Walk the Plank - Straight Jacket Escape. It is difficult, dangerous and funny, creating a visual spectacle.

Luo, on the other hand, performs classical magic tricks. "His Fishing in the Air is great," Dillon said, referring to one of Luo's tricks.

Both perform the Linking Ring Trick, but in different styles. Farrell's trick is done

with fewer rings, normally three, while Luo uses six to nine. Luo's emphasis is on the formation of the rings, while Dillon's is on the linking. "These are the differences of American and Chinese Linking Ring," Dillon said.

The Proprietor of Goose 'n' Duck, John Harkness, said the bar has new magicians every month, including visiting performers from New York, Chicago, Las

Vegas and Paris.

Where: Goose 'n' Duck, Greenlake Place, Tower S1 Green Lake International Tower (East side of Chaoyang Park), Chaoyang District
When: Daily except Sunday, 9 pm
Admission: 300 yuan (including dinner and drinks)
Tel: 5928 045/46/47



5 Friday, February 13

Exhibition Measures of Entanglement - Mona Hatoum Solo Exhibition

The exhibition features sculptures and installations made by the Palestinian British artist from 2006 onward, as well as a selection of her groundbreaking videos and works on paper.

Where: Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until April 5, daily except Monday, 10 am - 7 pm
Admission: 15 yuan
Tel: 8459 9269

Paper East Paintings West - Young Artists Group Exhibition



Five young artists explore creativity on paper.

Where: 94 Space, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: Until

March 12, daily except Monday, 11 am - 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 8456 0467

Movie

The Loves of a Blonde

Where: Lanyang Bookstore, 3 Shuimo Xinqu, Haidian District

When: 7:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6265 5069

Nightlife

Bad Apple

The born-in-California band will perform a combination of rock, reggae and blues.

Where: Lotus Blue (inside Lotus Lane), 51-56 Dianmen Dong Dajie, Xicheng District

When: 9 pm
Tel: 6617 2599

Black Cat Bone

Where: The Boat, 8 Liangmahe Nan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 10 pm
Admission: 40 yuan
Tel: 6460 5512

6 Saturday, February 14

Exhibition Breaking through the Ice - Qiu Zhijie Solo Exhibition

The conceptual artist's show marks the beginning of a new series of solo exhibitions by a new generation of local artists at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA).

Where: UCCA, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until May 15, daily except Monday, 10 am - 7 pm
Admission: 15 yuan
Tel: 8459 9269

Dragon Bones - Li Shuguang Solo Exhibition

This is the Anhui artist's first solo exhibition in Beijing.

Where: China Art Seasons, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 26, daily except Monday, 10:30 am - 6:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6431 1900

Nightlife

Valentine's Day

Where: New Get Lucky Bar (Haoyun), A1 Xingba Lu, Nuren Jie, Chaoyang District

When: 9:30 pm
Admission: 100 yuan (includes a gift)
Tel: 8448 3335

Movie

Eric Rohmer: Four Short Films

The following films will be screened: *Charlotte and Her Steak*, *The Girl at the Monceau Bakery*, *Suzanne's Career* and *Nadja in Paris*.

Where: French Culture Center, 1/F, Guangcai International Mansion, 18 Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 3 pm
Admission: 10-20 yuan
Tel: 6553 2627

7 Sunday, February 15

Exhibition Spring - Young Artists Group Exhibition

Where: New Age Gallery, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until March 20, daily except Monday, 11:30 am - 6:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 8459 9282

Movie

Candy

Film director Xin Jubo and scriptwriter Yang Meili will be present for a Q&A session immediately after the screening.

Where: D-22, 242 Chengfu Lu, Wudaokou, Haidian District

When: 4 pm
Admission: 10 yuan
Tel: 6265 3177

Corpse Bride

Where: Pin+Space, 1020 (1/F), Tower 10, Jianwai Soho, 39 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 6:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5869 3500

Letters from Death Row

This Chinese film was nominated for the Altadis-New Directors Award at the 2008 San Sebastian Film Festival.

Where: Cherry Lane Movie, Yugong Yishan, 3 Zhangzi Zhong Lu, Xicheng District

When: 8 pm
Admission: 30-50 yuan
Tel: 6404 2711

Pauline at the Beach

Where: French Culture Center, 1/F, Guangcai International Mansion, 18 Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 3 pm
Admission: 10-20 yuan
Tel: 6553 2627

Stage in March

Concert

Israeli Jazz Pianist Yaron Herman Recital

Where: Zhongshan Music Hall, Zhongshan Park, Dongcheng District
When: March 1, 7:30 pm
Admission: 30-380 yuan
Tel: 6559 8306

Vienna Philharmonic Concert

Who: Conducted by Zubin Mehta
Where: National Grand Theater Concert Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: March 8-9, 7:30 pm
Admission: 280-1,880 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

China Philharmonic Orchestra

2008-2009 Music Festival
Who: Conducted by Okko Kamu
Where: Zhongshan Music Hall, Zhongshan Park, Dongcheng District
When: March 13, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-880 yuan
Tel: 6559 8306

Sarah Brightman World Tour 2009

Where: Capital Gymnasium, 54 Zhongguancun Nan Dajie, Haidian District
When: March 22, 7:30 pm
Admission: 380-2,000 yuan
Tel: 6417 7845

China Philharmonic Orchestra

2008-2009 Music Festival
Who: Conducted by Jin Wang
Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District
When: March 28, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-880 yuan
Tel: 6501 1854

Alexander Paley Piano Recital

Where: Zhongshan Music Hall, Zhongshan Park, Dongcheng District
When: March 29, 7:30 pm
Admission: 30-380 yuan
Tel: 6559 8306

Dance

Onegin

Who: China National Ballet
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: March 1, 7:30 pm
Admission: 120-580 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Mei Lanfang

Who: The Guangzhou Ballet
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: March 6-8, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-480 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Raise the Red Lantern

Who: China National Ballet
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: March 14-15, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-600 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Drama

A Handful of Wild Jujubes

Who: Directed by Zhang Jigang
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: March 10-12, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-580 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

(By Li Jing)



Breathe easy for better health

By Venus Lee

When world-conqueror Alexander of Macedon was about to pass away, he was prepared to give half his kingdom to anybody who could give him one more day. By his last moments, the offer grew to include his whole kingdom for one breath.

Breath is the root of life, though most of us take it for granted and develop poor breathing habits over the years. "Nearly 90 percent of people can't adjust their respiration consciously. Inadequate breathing not only results in the brain lacking oxygen, but can also induce many chronic diseases," Liu Youning, director of the respiratory institute of the Chinese Medical Association, said.

Renewed focus on breath

As children, we breathe deeply, filling the lower abdomen and expanding the diaphragm more adequately. In healthy breathing, the diaphragm moves without restriction, descending as we inhale and ascending as we exhale. But as we grow older, we bury ourselves so much in the race for survival that we forget to breathe properly, and breathing tends to get narrower and shallower.

"Office workers don't often exercise; they always stay in one position for an extended period in front of the computer. They stop using their abdominal muscles aside from their diaphragm, so the lungs don't fill completely with air. Eventually their breath barely reaches the top of the lungs and stays mainly in the throat, leading to depletion of oxygen in the body," Liu said.

Breath controls all our responses: physical, mental and emotional. All our physical and psychological responses are accompanied by a change in breathing.

If you are surprised, a gasp immediately follows. If you are angry, your breath will become loud and noisy; if you are agitated and stressed out, it heaves the chest; if you are calm and peaceful, it becomes slow and steady. "When you are continuously exposed to pressure, the body will forget to relax, and your inhalation volume will be reduced," Kew En, chief trainer at the International Yoga Institute, said.

"There is not one correct way to breathe, but there are common ways in which people restrict their breathing," Zhang Husheng, the respiratory physician in Tongren Hospital, said.

Common mistakes

Chest Breathing

This is probably the most common breathing pattern in this stress-filled society. Also known as paradoxical breathing, it is a natural reflex when we are suddenly startled or frightened. Chest breathers restrict breath movement in the abdomen, forcing it higher up into the chest. This weakens upper body muscles, causing chronic tension in thoracic spine, shoulders and neck. Since they cannot breathe in and out fully, they resort to breathing more quickly to make up for lack of oxygen. Scientific evidence has pointed to a connection between chest breathing, heart disease and high blood pressure.

Reverse Breathing

This kind of breathing often arises from a habit of wearing restrictive clothing or tight belts, which make it impossible for the abdomen to expand during any breathing phase. Since reverse breathing causes confusion in the diaphragm, it also results in mental disorientation. Reverse breathers often feel uncoordinated. Hence, chronic tension in their upper body, espe-

cially around the back of the neck, upper shoulder, upper back, and jaw area.

Breath Grabbing

Breath has three phases: exhalation, pause and inhalation. Breath grabbers grasp the next breath without taking a pause. This pause normally results in a sense of ease, surrender and relaxation. Breath grabbers are the kind of people who finish other people's sentences for them. They also feel that if they do not jump in or reach out for what they want, then they will miss out or be left behind.

Hyperventilation

This breathing pattern develops out of chest breathing. It is more restrictive: less oxygen is taken in with each breath and too much carbon dioxide is lost. Carbon dioxide is the most crucial ingredient in helping us maintain an acid-alkaline balance in the blood, and its loss causes a metabolic shift from acid to alkaline. It restricts brain arteries and makes nerves and muscles hyperactive, leads to headache, lack of concentration, dizziness, breathlessness, cold hands and feet and inappropriate responses.

Best way to breathe

Obstructing breath means cutting oneself off from the most vital source of human energy. A free respiratory process is essential in maintaining a "normal" rate of breathing.

"According to the Tao of Natural Breathing, our inhalation and exhalation cycle is 12 to 14 times a minute when we are awake and six to eight times a minute when we are asleep. A baby breathes at about twice these rates," Liu Youning, said.

Not only does breath have a regular cycle, it can change radically with different activities. After extreme physical activity, it can go up to 100 times a minute. But serious and correct breathers can

breathe four to eight times a minute, as they take in more oxygen and expel more carbon dioxide with each exhalation and inhalation.

"[The] correct rhythm is three seconds to inhale, five to 10 seconds to hold and two seconds to exhale," Zhang Husheng said.

Zhang said people can practice deep breathing anywhere and anytime, whether climbing mountains, standing on the bus, walking or during downtime. Times of tension offer the best chance to take control of one's physical and mental state. Swimming, long-distance running are simple but effective ways to improve lung capacity and oxygen intake volume.

Breathing deep matters

Zhang said deep breathing has many benefits. First, it can prevent many respiratory diseases, such as chronic bronchitis and asthma. It can strengthen the chest muscle's contractile force gradually and is conducive to expansion of the lungs and chest.

Second, it can prevent high blood pressure. There are 300 million tiny sacs for holding air in the lungs, but only 80 percent are used in chest breathing. If you are an abdominal breather, all

alveolus can work and will produce enough prostaglandin, a potent substance that acts like a hormone. When prostaglandin enters into the blood vessels, it will cause vascular dilatation and lower blood pressure.

It can also ease stress and insomnia. The bad moods and neck pain of many office workers can be alleviated through deep breathing. It can also cause insomniacs to fall asleep more easily than counting sheep.

CFP Photo



A day not just for sweethearts

By Jackie Zhang

Valentine's Day is here again. But you do not have to be coupled to enjoy the day: In a city as huge and as progressive as Beijing, there is something to satisfy everybody's needs. No matter whether you are single, dating, married or harboring a secret crush, Valentine's Day is the perfect opportunity for you to make your romantic dreams come true.

A single woman, a boyfriend and girlfriend, a newly married couple and a husband and wife of more than 10 years will give us tips on how to have an unforgettable February 14.

Single and ready to mingle

Lina Li, 28, administrative staff at a four-star hotel

"Some people think that being single is tough. But it's actually more relaxing," she said. "I don't think singles don't have a right to celebrate Valentine's Day. On the contrary, we should make full use of the day to look for new possibilities, drive loneliness away and enjoy ourselves."

To get rid of her frustrations, one of Li's therapeutic activities is to scream loudly. It seems there is no better place to indulge than in an amusement park.

"Happy Valley is my top choice," Li said. "I love roller coasters."

When the train accelerates,

my heart beats faster I scream from excitement. When the ride finishes and I get off the train, I feel light-hearted. It drives away depressing thoughts."

This year, Happy Valley has organized special events for Valentine's Day. And guess who will be there? "Single men and women who don't know each other will be paired together to sing songs. It's a nice chance to meet new friends," Li said.

Happy Valley

Where: Xiaowuji Nanlu, Dongsihuan, Chaoyang

Open: 10 am - 10 pm

Admission: 160 yuan per person

Suggested activity:

Singles party

Where: China International Hi-tech Convention and Exhibition Center, 48 Beisanhuan Xi Lu, Haidian District

When: 6:30-9:30 pm

Tel: 13164272754

Admission: Free



Photo provided by Lina



CFP Photos



Savoring the sweetness of love

Wang Yan, 26, government employee

Jiang Ning, 28, government employee

"My boyfriend and I don't go out much. Our favorite place is a small restaurant, Haoku, which serves delicious oysters and scallops," Wang said.

Haoku is popular with young diners. "You have to book a table, otherwise it's quite possible you won't have a table until the restaurant closes," Wang said. Barbecued oysters and scallops are the dishes that draw in the crowd. "Oysters served with mashed garlic are the best-tasting. Oysters with black pepper are delicious as well," she said.

Haoku Barbeque

Where: 13 Dachenggou Hutong, Xicheng

Open: 5-11 pm

Tel: 6605 5344

Average cost: 50-100 yuan

Suggested activity:

Do-it-yourself cake

Ziwei Wuyu

Where: 809, Building A, Chaowaime Center, 26 Chaoyangmen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

Open: 11 am - 10 pm

Tel: 8565 4300

Average cost: 200 per cake

Aside from selling cakes, Ziwei Wuyu also welcomes customers to create their own, adding to it whatever toppings they want. Sweethearts can book to design their "cake of love" on Valentine's Day. The shop's staff will be on hand to assist.



Photo provided by Wang Yan

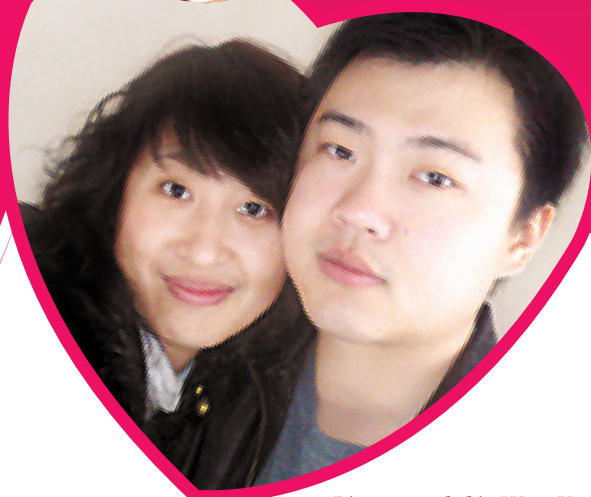


Photo provided by Wang Yan

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... continued from page 20

Strengthening newly-wed love

Wu Qi, 26, foreign company employee
Shi Nan, 30, magazine editor

Maple Drive-in is first on the list of newly married couple Wu and Shi. "Before we married, we spent lots of time watching movies there. Now, it's always our first choice for entertainment after work," Wu said.

Maple, near the city center, has four lots that screen different films every night. Each car is charged one ticket corresponding to the movie of choice. "It's more comfortable to watch movies in a drive-in theater. We have privacy inside the car: We can talk, laugh and eat, which would disturb other moviegoers in cinemas," Wu said.

Another reason Wu likes the drive-in is that every time they go, she gets a rose. "It's our special gift to patrons," a staff member at Maple said. "We also give lollipops as gifts."

A church is another place to visit with your loved one. "Young people have been influenced by other cultures. I usually go to church on Christmas Eve. On Valentine's Day, it's a good idea to go to church for blessing," Shi said. "Even if you do not belong to a particular religion, it's still nice to pray for your partner," he said.

Maple Drive-in

Where: 21 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang
 Open: 6:30 pm – early next morning

Tel: 6438 0508

Admission: 200 yuan per car for Valentine's Day (another ticket will be given as a gift)

Wangfujing Catholic Church

Where: 74 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng
 Open: Every morning

Tel: 6521 2162

Suggested activity:

Masquerade Ball

Beijing International Sculpture Park

Where: 2 Shijingshan Lu, Shijingshan

When: February 14, 2 pm onward

Tel: 6866 9929

Admission: 10 yuan (women get in free)



Wangfujing Catholic Church CFP Photo



Photo provided by Wu Qi

Celebrating the gift of family

Zhang Liping, 32, administrative staff at a local company
Guo Daren, 35, government employee
Guo Jiahe, One year and eight months

"When my son was born two years ago, ours became a world of three," Zhang said. "The boy brought us special happiness even though life became more hectic," she said.

Thus, February 14 for them will be a family day. "Valentine's Day is not only for young lovers," Zhang said. "Valentine's Day takes on another meaning when the whole family celebrates the joy of being together."

Zhang and Guo plan to take their son to the Museum of Natural

History. "My husband and I have not yet visited the museum. We'll learn some natural science history together with my son," Zhang said.

On regular days, the couple likes to take the boy to the children's fun park at The Place. The playground is decorated in bright colors and there are staff members to ensure the children's safety.

"Every time we go there, my son thoroughly enjoys himself," Zhang said. "There's a Balloon House in which four fans blow balloons around the house and children chase them. Sometimes, a balloon bursts, but children don't feel frightened; instead they laugh at the unexpectedness of it."

Near the playground are cafes, restaurants and shops where adults can take a break by having a meal or going shopping.

Museum of Natural History

Where: 126 Tianqiao Nan Dajie, Chongwen District

Open: 9 am – 5 pm

Tel: 6702 4431

Admission: 15 yuan per person

Children's fun park at The Place

Where: 4/F, south building of The Place, 9A Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Admission: 50 yuan per child

Suggested activity:

Beijing Aquarium

Where: Beijing Zoo, 137 Xizhimen Wai Dajie, Xicheng District

Open: 9 am – 5 pm

Tel: 6212 3910

Admission: 120 per adult
 60 per child

The Beijing Aquarium attracts families who would like their children to learn about creatures of the sea. At the same time, it is a popular dating spot for lovers who like to stimulate their minds.



The Place CFP Photo



Beijing Aquarium



Photos provided by
 Zhang Liping



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By Preston Teeter

It was 8 pm and the seemingly eternal meeting continued. The employees constantly glanced at their watches, stared at one another in despair, and imagined the anger on their spouses' faces when they returned home. At 8:30 pm, the meeting finished, and as everyone walked out of the office, they muttered a common phrase, "What a waste of time!"

Perhaps you have had a similar experience in your career. Employees in multinational companies spend an average of 5.5 hours per week in meetings, and over 70 percent of these employees feel their meetings are not productive. Unfortunately, for most companies, meetings are a necessary platform to spread information, discuss pertinent issues, and make decisions. Given these circumstances, the obvious question one must pose is, "What can I do to make my meetings more effective and efficient?"

Time management

Quite possibly the most practical yet overlooked meeting skill is time management. The number one complaint from employees is that meetings are excessively time-consuming. Fear not, for a few simple techniques can help to

ensure your meetings make the most of every minute.

The first technique, if it even deserves to be categorized as such, is simply to start every meeting at exactly the time your agenda states. The reason is quite simple; if your meeting starts a few minutes late, those who are on time will feel cheated of their time – that they are wasting five or ten minutes of their day – while those who are late do not waste a second and are seemingly rewarded for their tardiness. Employees who arrive early or on time will notice this phenomenon and accordingly arrive late to the next meeting, allowing the problem to avalanche out of control. Starting on time ensures that those who are tardy will experience a certain degree of guilt and will be more likely to arrive on time for the next meeting.

A second time management technique is to strictly allocate and enforce the time spent on each topic. As a simple example, if my meeting is one hour and my team must discuss three issues, I would allocate twenty minutes for each issue. At the end of every twenty-minute period, I must wrap up the current topic and move onto the next. Lastly, give your meetings a time buffer. If you anticipate a one-hour meeting, allocate



CFP Photo

an hour and fifteen minutes in the agenda. If an item needs longer than expected, you will end on time. If everything goes according to plan, you will end early and everyone will leave thinking "I just saved fifteen minutes of my day!"

Clear objectives

If you begin a meeting with the phrase, "Today I'd like to talk about ..." eyes will immediately start to roll. This is simply because employees feel the need to accomplish something in your meeting. They not only want to discuss the next marketing event but also want to leave the meeting with a feeling that they have completed a step or phase of the event. Therefore, begin your meetings with clear objectives that can be met within the given time. Do not use vague objectives like "discuss" or "brainstorm," but rather use strong, specific words like "clarify" or "decide." So in your next meet-

ing, begin with a phrase like, "Thank you all for coming today. As you know, our next marketing event is in two months, and today I'd like for us to decide who will be responsible for five separate roles and the deadlines for all preparation." After your objectives are met, all meeting participants will walk away with a clear sense of accomplishment.

Talk becomes walk

English speakers use the phrase "He can talk the talk, but can he walk the walk?" when doubting whether someone will actually take action for their words. Almost every discussion, clarification, and decision must evolve from mere words into specific actions in order for meetings to be truly effective. This happens with action points. A great action point has three characteristics: Who, What and When. The facilitator wraps up each item by

determining which meeting participant will be responsible for carrying out the action with an appropriate deadline.

A great communication technique to use in this scenario is to ask for the deadline and get a public commitment. For example, instead of demanding "Jonathan, you need to finish the first draft of this proposal by Friday, the 17th and email everyone Friday morning," you could ask, "Jonathan, thanks for volunteering to write the first draft. The customer will need the proposal by Friday, 5 pm at the latest, and everyone will need at least one day to review it beforehand. When could you email everyone with the first draft?" After Jonathan publicly announces his deadline, he will never forget it.

Preston Teeter is the national RDS manager of ClarkMorgan Corporate Training

Dining

A dazzling Valentine's Day

This Valentine's day, Crowne Plaza Park View Wuzhou offers a five-course romantic western set dinner with live music performed by its resident band from the Philippines. Each couple has a chance in a raffle to win a diamond ring and a weekend stay.

Where: Yellowstone Restaurant & Bar, Crowne Plaza Park View Wuzhou, 8 Beichen Dong Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: 888 yuan net per couple (includes two glasses of Champagne Mumm), 1,288 yuan net (includes one bottle of Champagne Mumm)

Tel: 6481 7000

Love at Kempinski

This Valentine's Day, Kempinski offers an oasis of romance and warmth, impeccable service and extensive dining options to dazzle your loved one.

Where: Kempinski Hotel, 50 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: 888 yuan per couple (Trattoria La Gondola), 688 yuan (Kranzler's Restaurant & Bar), 488 yuan (Paulaner Brauhaus), subject to 15 percent surcharge

Tel: 6465 3388 ext 4118

Set your senses alive

With Valentine's Day approaching, every restaurant at the Shangri-La Hotel will light up its stoves to prepare innovative set menus that cater to the romantic at heart.

Where: Shangri-La Hotel Beijing, 29 Zizhuyuan Lu, Haidian District

Cost: 1,988 yuan per couple (Blu Lobster), 698 yuan per person (Nishimura), 798 yuan per person (Shang Palace), 699 yuan per person; 1,399 yuan per couple (Cafe Cha), subject to 15 percent surcharge

Tel: 8882 6572

Romantic Candlelight Dinner

The hotel will offer two stylish romantic candlelight dinners. Get a 78 percent special discount when booking the room, including double breakfast, swimming and fitness at the Bluebird.

Where: Zhaolong Hotel, 2 Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: February 14

Cost: 499 yuan per couple (Love Unlimited), 599 yuan (Heaven-Sent Marriage), subject to 15 percent surcharge

Tel: 65972299 ext 0216



Valentine's Day Set Meal

Enjoy an unforgettable evening of true romance at Novotel Hotels Beijing West Zhongguancun. Its Valentine's Day set meal is prepared for lovers and served with champagne, chocolate and a red rose.

Where: Novotel Hotels Beijing West

Zhongguancun, 36 Haidian Nan Lu, Haidian District

When: February 14, 6-10 pm

Cost: 288 yuan per couple (plus 300 yuan for one night in Loft Suite)

Tel: 8266 9999 ext 5905



In bed with Zeta

Spend an intimate evening in the chic surrounds of Zeta Bar, languishing in the heady bubbles of a bottle of Mumm Champagne. Continue the fun in a stylish Deluxe Room. Limited to 15 couples. All prices are subject to 15 percent surcharge and reservations are essential.

Where: Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: 1,999 yuan

(includes dinner for two in Zeta Bar and a Deluxe Room with breakfast)

Tel: 5865 5000

His & Hers Valentine

From the land of Romeo and Juliette, Daccapo's celebrated chef, Tobias Gensheimer, creates a unique five-course menu to celebrate love as only Italians can. A strolling violinist, complimentary glass of sparkling wine and a special gift will make every couple's evening a memorable one.

Where: Daccapo's Italian restaurant, Regent Beijing Hotel, 99 Jinbao Jie, Dongcheng District

When: February 14, 6-10:30 pm

Cost: 688 yuan per couple (subject to 15 percent surcharge and reservations are essential)

Tel: 8522 1789

Hotel

Winter Hot Pick

Hilton Beijing Wangfujing invites everyone to enjoy this Winter Hot Pick offer: a 500-yuan credit usable in any of the hotel's four restaurants and bars or a choice of other facilities and services is included as part of this winter package. The rate is subject to 15 percent surcharge and

the Hilton reserves the right to final decision.

Where: Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, 8 Wangfujing Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Before February 28

Cost: From 1,350 yuan (deluxe room)

Tel: 5812 8888

Wedding Packages

The JW Marriott Hotel offers five packages tailor-made for the newlywed, which include a wide selection of Western or Chinese set lunch menus, wedding cake, dressing room, red carpet, breakfast, a floral centerpiece and one deluxe room king with wedding amenity for that first night. The luxury package includes a cocktail party in the garden, coupons for the restaurant and spa, Bentley/Benz service, a presidential suite for the couple and deluxe rooms for the couple's parents.

Where: JW Marriott Hotel



Beijing, 83 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Before February 28

Cost: 2,988-19,888 yuan per table (subject to 15 percent surcharge)

Tel: 5908 6688

(By Sun Feng)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Gan Tian at gantian@ynet.com.

Off the sauce

By Charles Zhu

Earnest Hemingway, in his short story "Ash Heel's Tendon," talked about "w.w.s." as the weaknesses of man. The first time I read it, I was bewildered by the initials. What did they stand for? Later, after delving into dictionaries of fables and thinking it over, I realized the letters meant "wine, women and song."

Evans, God's killer in the story, was nabbed by the police as he was drinking at a bar and listening to a song by Enrico Caruso. Truly, wine and song led to the fall of this tough guy.

In real life, I see drunkards, whisky bottle in hand, sleeping on the sidewalk be it in the blistering summer heat or the freezing cold of dead winter. Every time I see such people, including those on the verge of losing consciousness or those itching for a fight with anyone who comes their way, I am reminded of Harry, a former flatmate in Boston.

I heard from another friend Dave that Harry had an alcoholic brother back home in Dallas who got violent whenever he hit the bottle. As a result, the brother's wife left him together with their only son, and he lost his job as a computer scientist. But he continued drinking heavily, sometimes alone in his kitchen into the wee hours of the morning. Once, he even brandished a knife at his father who told him to stop drinking because he was digging himself an early grave. The brother used to be a healthy man, but liquor reduced him to skin and bones. It was a sad story for anyone who heard it.

One Saturday night, Harry got an unexpected call from his father. They had a long talk over the phone. When he came back



CFP Photo

to our apartment living room, he was exceptionally elated, repeatedly saying: "Thank God, he's off the sauce."

All the friends who were present cheered, sharing Harry's happiness. I did not react, because I did not understand what just happened.

I tried to figure out the meaning of the word "sauce." Sauce refers to something liquid, served with food to make it taste better, for instance soy sauce, or in the US, stewed fruit or the like. What is there to be elated when somebody gets rid of a sauce like that? I asked a friend from Britain, but he did

not know either.

The following weekend, Harry announced that his brother was coming to Boston and invited all the flatmates to have dinner with him and his brother. We went to Faneuil Market to have baked T-bone and had it in a very south-western-US style: we ate on long rugged wooden tables with long kitchen knives to tackle the bones. We all had beer except for Harry's brother. In fact, he abstained from anything that contained alcohol. Everybody cheered his new life. My friends again congratulated him for at last being "off the sauce."

The next day, I saw Dave in school. As a student of linguistics, I was very interested in words and spent a lot of time trying to figure out those I did not know. "What did you guys mean when you said 'off the sauce?'" I asked.

"Don't you know it?"

"No," I replied.

He told me that in American slang, "sauce" means alcohol; and when people say "off the sauce," it means that someone has given up alcohol. With this new knowledge, I got a better picture of what occurred in the past week, and more clearly understood the depth of Harry's happiness.

Blacklist

Beijing Today has come up with Blacklist, a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then this page is your new best friend. Watch out for it each week.

Local professor: Zhu Shida

1. Regardless of whether the collapse was caused by geology or human activity

I have several points to discuss about this sentence. First, "regardless" is an adjective meaning "unmindful" (often used in tandem with "of"). You would say for example, "regardless of life or death" or "regardless of the consequences." It is wrong to use "regardless" in this case; instead, "no matter whether" should be used. Secondly, geology is a branch of science, and definitely cannot cause the collapse of any house; rather, a collapse is caused by geological changes. The phrase should then be rewritten this way: No matter whether the collapse was caused by geological changes or human activity.

2. Residents, businesses and visitors

When you enumerate a series of things, you need put them in categories. The problem with this phrase lies precisely in the fact that the items here do not belong in the same category. The correct way to say this is, "Residents, businesspeople and visitors."

Native speaker: Penny Turner

1. Regardless of whether the collapse was caused by geology or human activity

The only problem I have with this sentence is the use of "geology" for the reasons explained by Professor Zhu: it is a study of the history of the earth, especially as recorded in rocks. A phrase such as "geological factors," to parallel "human activity," may instead be used. I think the sentence works just fine with "regardless of whether" used to introduce the two possible causes of collapse.

2. Residents, businesses and visitors

I agree with the Professor's diagnosis of this sentence: consistency is needed in the type of words used on the list. Residents and visitors refer to people, while a business is a commercial entity. Aside from businesspeople, you can also use "entrepreneurs" or another synonym.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please take a picture and send it to gantian@ynet.com together with your name and address.

Deformed man lavatory

By Tiffany Tan

I think you cannot get more politically incorrect than using "deformed" to describe disabled individuals. This is a clear illustration of how political correctness, even courtesy, gets flushed down the toilet (pun intended) when one is trying to grapple with a foreign language. Four years ago in Beijing, I remember someone saying, I apologize if I my words come across as

rude, but I'm speaking in a foreign language and I may not be using the required courtesies.

The Chinese word *canji* literally means deformed, so it looks like the English translation went straight from dictionary to sign.

Something else was bungled: This toilet is unisex. The character for person, *ren*, was translated as "man." No equality of the sexes, either. Sigh.



Sex and the City

(2008)

Movie of the week

For super fans of the series which ended four years ago, the movie comes like an update to share recent events in the lives of the four women. In addition to showing their age, the transition to the big screen lost something of the famous scenes and classic dialogues. But most fans were still happy it ended on a high note.

Synopsis

After moving in together in a magnificent New York apartment, Carrie Bradshaw and Mr. Big make a rather arbitrary decision to get married. The wedding itself proves to be anything but a hasty affair. Meanwhile, Carrie's girlfriends – Samantha, the sexpot, Charlotte, the sweet naïf, and Miranda, the rigid perfectionist – have their own problems. Charlotte still hopes to get pregnant. Samantha is finding a loving, committed relationship more grueling than she could have imagined. Miranda unwittingly lets her own unhappiness – when Steve admits to cheating on her just once – spoil Carrie's.



Scene 1: An auction

(Carrie's opening monologue)

Year after year, 20-something women come to New York City in search of the two L's: labels and love. Twenty years ago, I was one of them. Having gotten the knack for labels early, I concentrated on my search for love. Turns out, a **knockoff (1)** is not as easy to spot when it comes to love ...

It was a rare occasion that brought all types of New York women together. Blair El Kenn was a waitress-turned-model-turned-actress-turned billionaire's girlfriend who came home one night to find herself unceremoniously turned out on the street. And now she was getting the ultimate breakup revenge: an embarrassing and very public auction of all the jewelry he had given her when they were happy.

Samantha: There it is. My baby.

Carrie: Oh, she's a beauty.

Samantha: When I saw it in the catalog, I said to Smith: "This flower ring is the essence of me. **One of a kind (2)**, filled with fire."

Carrie: And a little too much.

Samantha: Exactly.

Samantha: Let's go spend some of my hard-earned Hollywood money.

Scene 2: In Charlotte's apartment

Big: I need to talk.

Carrie: What?

Big: I'm sitting here trying to write these vows and ... Is this something we really wanna do?

Carrie: Hey, you know what? You guys, it's Big. I'm gonna ... I'm gonna take it.

Charlotte: Get some sleep, groomie.

Carrie: What's the matter?

Big: It's just everything is great as it is. I don't wanna **screw it up (3)**.

Carrie: You won't.

Big: I screwed it up twice before.

Carrie: Here's the thing. This is me you're marrying tomorrow. Me. It's nobody else.

Big: Yeah?

Carrie: And I'm marrying you. It's me and you. And do you wanna hear the great news there?

Big: Yeah.

Carrie: We've both already done everything we can to screw it up. Is that a smile I'm hearing?

Big: Yeah.

Carrie: It sounds to me like you've got a bit of writer's block on the vow front.

Big: Yeah.

Carrie: And I find, you know, as a profes-

sional writer that it's best to just, you know just stop thinking about it so much and go to bed. And in the morning ...

Big: You'll know what to do.

Carrie: Exactly. And if not, then just write this: I will love you. Simple, to the point and I swear I won't even try to **take credit for (4)** it. So you're gonna go to bed now, right?

Big: Okay. Good night.

Carrie: I'll see you tomorrow. And hey, it's me and you.

Scene 3: Vogue editor's office

Enid: We're putting together our annual age issue and we'd like you to do 40.

Carrie: Great. Who am I interviewing?

Enid: No. You. You are 40. I want you to be featured in the magazine as the 40-year-old ... And here's the brilliant twist. Bride.

Carrie: Wait, I'm ... I would be in the magazine?

Enid: In bridal couture. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so spare me a week of faux **soul-searching (5)** and just say yes.

Carrie: Enid, I am so very flattered, but honestly, I ...

Enid: Carrie, vogue designers. Vogue photographers. Vogue airbrushing. Nod your head. Yes. Thank you. It will be a sensation. We're calling it "The Last Single Girl."

Carrie: Well, I'm hardly the last single girl.

Enid: No, but 40 is the last age a woman can be photographed in a wedding gown without the unintended Diane Arbus subtext.

Carrie: I thought the issue was "Great Style at Every Age."

Enid: Style, yes. Bride, no.

Scene 4: In Carrie and Big's new apartment

Big: Is there a funny part?

Carrie: We were perfectly happy before we decided to live happily ever after. Guess the joke's on us.

Carrie: It's a good closet.

Big: Thanks.

Carrie: It's comfortable. Is this what you had in mind when you installed the carpet?

Big: I'd like to think I was that smooth.

Carrie: We better get up before the new owners **burst in on (6)** us.

Big: And the way we decided to get married ... it was all business. No romance. That's not the way you propose to someone. This is. Carrie Bradshaw ... love of my life ... will you marry me? See, this is why there's a diamond. You need to do something to **close the deal (7)**.

Vocabulary

- 1. Knockoff:** an imitation of a major brand name, often priced dramatically lower than an authentic one.
- 2. One of a kind:** something unique.
- 3. Screw up:** make a mess of something, destroy or ruin something
- 4. Take credit for:** to steal the contribution
- 5. Soul-searching:** a penetrating examination and consideration of one's own beliefs and motives.
- 6. Burst in on:** suddenly show up
- 7. Close the deal:** to come to an agreement

(By Zhang Dongya)